Chevrons

LEONARD H. NASON

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BY

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THREE LIGHTS FROM A MATCH

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Chapter I

HUNGRY MEN AT VAUCOULEURS

TWO men sat by a roadside in attitudes of deep dejection. Their faces were white and their eyes haggard. They were clothed in uniforms of faded olive drab, with blouse and breeches that did not match, with glaringly new shoes, and a ridiculous shapeless cap. Both men had full packs and one carried rifle and bayonet. A mounted patrol of Military Police had passed that way a short time before, but one keen glance at the two men had satisfied the police. Those faded uniforms, neatly patched here and there, and with buttons that were not mates, were salvage uniforms taken from wounded men, cleaned, repaired, and issued out again to men leaving the military hospital. The white faces, the new shoes, the over-full packs and the second-hand clothes were old features to the police. They meant that the wearers were wounded men who, discharged from hospital and sick to death of the monotony, the hideous quarters and the frightful food of the replacement camps, had slung their packs on their backs and, selecting a night when the guards would be under cover, had gone over the hill and were trying to rejoin their organizations. As long as these men had their faces turned toward the front, and as long as they behaved themselves, the police would not bother them.

One of the men looked behind him, at the way the two had come. A white road, baking under the hot sun of early September, went up and down over the hills and so out of sight. He looked the other way, toward the opposite horizon. The road looped its way, shimmering in the heat, an equal distance. Between the two horizons were trees, newly mowed fields, and clumps of bush, but no other living thing.

"Sergeant," said the man, "you sure we're on the right road?"

The other man turned on his side to get his hand into his breeches pocket. He had a sergeant's stripes sewed rather askew on one sleeve, and a rusty looking gold V on his right cuff showed that he had been wounded in action. He drew out a creased and dirty envelope and extracted a sheet of thin paper therefrom.

"Sergeant Robert Eadie," began the typewritten paper, "Base Hospital 23, Vittel, Vosges. Dear sergeant: The regiment will be at Vaucouleurs until Sept. 12. It is hoped that you can rejoin us there." There was an indistinguishable scrawl and the typewritten words, "Personal Officer, 79th F. A." On the strength of this thin sheet of paper these two men had traveled across France.

The sergeant got stiffly to his feet and inspected a milepost near where the two had sat down.

"Yep, Darcy," said he, " 'Vaucouleurs, 7 Kilos,' it says. Well, we're half way. That's cheering."

"Oh, God!" said the other man. "Is that all we are?"

"Only about four miles more," said the sergeant comfortingly. He looked at his watch. "It's twelve o'clock," he added. "Now if we should hustle even, we wouldn't get in in time for chow. Well, they'll have something they can give us for a handout. Even cold beans would do. Let's see, to-day's Sunday. They might have a good dinner. I remember once we had a chicken dinner on

Sunday. Remember, Darcy, at Cokeydawn? Well, let's start out anyway."

Darcy likewise got to his feet and stamped about a minute or two. "This rifle is breakin' my shoulder," said he. "When we was ridin' in the train I didn't mind, but since we had to take to our feet it's near killin' me. What the hell an artilleryman does with a rifle, I don't know."

"Drop it in the road," said the sergeant.

"It's charged to me," said Darcy sadly.

"Charged to you!" cried the sergeant. "How do they know at the outfit that it's charged to you? Leave it against the tree and I'll be a witness that you never were issued one."

"I dursn't," said Darcy. "They might write from the replacement camp. I'm liable to get a blind that'll take the rest o' my life to pay for goin' over the hill and I don't want to have to pay for no rifle on the top of it. I've found stuff on my payroll before now. I lost a bed sack once. I ain't kiddin', sergeant, the price that thing cost, you'd think it was embroidered with diamonds! No, I'll hang on to the rifle."

The two started out, Darcy shouldering his rifle bravely. They went down the hills and clambered up the other side. The heat grew, and the straps of their packs cut deeply. The road was never level, it went always up or down. Walking downhill gave them a rest, but they were doubly exhausted in climbing the opposite slope. They sat down often, for they were hot, they were thirsty, and their new shoes hurt. The sergeant felt that strange weakness, that washed-out feeling in the legs that comes from a stay in hospital. Each hill they climbed they expected to see the roofs of Vaucouleurs before them, but when they had panted up to the top, and looked despairingly around, they could see nothing but more hills and the white road glimmering over the crests.

"Cheer up," said the sergeant at last, after Darcy had cast himself full length on the dusty grass and buried his face in his hands. "We only got two more kilos to go and I bet from the top of the next hill we can see the town. Maybe the outfit is camped outside the town on our side of it. We'll be back with it in another half-hour, and then that will be the end of eating handouts of cold goldfish and of running around France. No more hoppin' trains, no more sleeping on station benches, no more ducking the police, no more 'Naw, we ain't got enough to feed our own gang!'"

"Good," said Darcy, sitting up, "I'm glad we're gettin' there. I'm about outta gas. Do you really think maybe they'd have somethin' left from dinner?"

"Sure," said the sergeant, "I know Capodanno. If he hasn't been turned to duty for lapping up all the lemon extract, he'll have something to eat. The Old Man is always mooching around the kitchen for a lunch and Cap keeps ham and sardines and cold meat and stuff to give him. The government sure loses money on feeding our Old Man. They ought to charge him double. Well, let's stir our stumps."

"Come on," said Darcy. "Let's get it over with." He leaped to his feet and the two started off. The heat of the road burned through their hobnails, the glare of the sun from the white chalk surface made their eyes sting, but the next hill was the last and over it was their home, their battery, their friends, and food. They bravely breasted the ascent, the stones slipped under their feet and sweat poured down their faces, but they kept on. Sergeant Eadie shifted his pack and putting his hands under the bottom of it lifted it so that the straps would not cut his shoulders so. The summit of the hill drew nearer.

"What'll you bet we can see the camp from the top?" asked Eadie.

"It'll be the gladdest sight *I* ever seen," replied the other.

They reached the top, took two or three paces, and sure enough, at the bottom of the next slope, though quite a distance yet down the valley, rose the moss covered roofs, the weather beaten gray walls, and the high church towers of a town of considerable size. The men could see soldiers moving about and half way down the slope was an aviation camp, with huge canvas tents for hangars.

"That's us," said the sergeant. "That's Vaucouleurs."

The two marched forward almost briskly, without taking their customary rest. As they descended the slope they passed more and more soldiers, but they saw no familiar faces, nor did they see anything that looked like a camp of field artillery.

"It would probably be in the woods somewhere," said Eadie, "on account of air raids. We wouldn't be able to see it from the road anyway."

They entered the town, following a street bordered by a stone wall. They looked sharply into the houses on the opposite side, searching for a place where liquid refreshment was sold.

"If we can only find a barroom," said Darcy, "there'll be some of our gang in it."

"Ah, but it's dinner-time," said Eadie. "Maybe they haven't left camp yet. You know what a gang they are for lying around and chewing the fat after meals."

"Why don't yuh ask a M. P.?" suggested Darcy. "This looks to be quite a town and we might go right past the road to our camp."

"I'll do it," said Eadie. "He won't say anything about a pass. A man doesn't need a pass to take a walk on a Sunday in the town his outfit is stationed in."

There was an M. P. talking to a girl a few houses down the street and the two went toward him.

"Hey, soldier," said Eadie, moving up to the M. P. sideways, so that both his sergeant's chevrons and wound stripe could be seen, "can you tell us where the 79th Field Artillery hangs out?"

The M. P. turned majestically from his conversation with the girl. He bent lowering brows upon the two. Could they not see he was busy? Darcy shifted his weight uncomfortably. If this bird asked them for a pass now—

"The what?" asked the M. P.

"The 79th Field," answered the sergeant.

"I never heard of 'em," said the M. P.

"Well, this is the Third Division headquarters, isn't it?" asked Eadie.

"Search me," said the M. P. "They come an' go. I don't keep track of 'em." He turned and continued his conversation with the girl. "Er-voo," said he, "hweet heures, ici."

The two soldiers in full pack moved sadly away. "Don't let's get excited," said Eadie, "because these M. P.'s never know their right hand from their left. The next guy I see I'm going to ask where the division P. C. is and then we'll go there and find out where our outfit is."

"Here comes a guy," cried Darcy suddenly, "an' he's got a 4 on his collar. He's outta the Fourth Infantry. Hey, guy, where at's the division P. C.?"

The other man did not stop in his stride. "Yuh come by it," he called. "Go back and take the second street to your right."

The two turned around and, hitching their packs to a more comfortable position, dragged their feet back along the way they had come, past the house where they had

seen the date-making M. P. to the second street on their right, down which they turned.

"It's kind of a hard job," remarked Eadie, "to find an outfit in a divisional area. There are close to thirty thousand men in a division. That would populate quite a town back home."

"There's the P. C.," said Darcy cheerfully. "I can see an auto outside of it."

The two walked forward with more spring in their gait than formerly, though Eadie had a sinking feeling about the heart. Automobiles with army numbers were quite common. The car stood indeed before the P. C., for there was a sign that said so. "Headquarters Third Division, U. S. Army. Keep gate clear." The two soldiers went in, one hundred and twenty steps to the minute, full pack and all.

In the hall of the house sat an officer, smoking a cigar and fanning himself with a newspaper. He looked calmly at the two soldiers who came to a halt before him, banged their heels, and saluted.

"Sir," said Eadie, "could the captain tell us where the 79th Field Artillery camp is?"

"The 79th," repeated the officer, still looking curiously at the two. "Hmmm. Oh, Claflin," he called. There was the stir of a chair being pushed back in one of the rooms and another officer entered. He clanked his spurs, a little chain he wore on his wrist jingled. This officer twisted his tiny mustache and looked very sternly at the two soldiers.

"The 79th," said he in a judicial tone. "What division are they with?"

Eadie's heart fell suddenly to his boots as a stone falls down a well. Darcy's rifle butt rattled on the floor. These two men were tired, they were hungry, they had battled their way from one corner of France to the other, pinning

their hope on that one letter from the personnel officer, and now that they had arrived at their destination, it began to look as if they were as far from their regiment as they had been in the replacement camp. In addition, they had made a fourteen-kilometer hike in the blazing heat and on empty stomachs, and trifles assume very serious proportions after such exertion. Then Eadie heard the other officer, the captain, speaking.

"No, no, lieutenant," said the captain, and there was something of reproach in his tone, "the 79th is in this division. Don't you know where their mail goes?"

"I leave all that to Sergeant Pappas," replied the lieutenant. "He must be around here. I saw him myself not five minutes ago. These men want to get back to their outfit, don't you? Sure you do."

The lieutenant clanked away and the men in the hall heard the far-away hum of a buzzer.

"Hot walking?" asked the captain, blowing cigar smoke.

Before the men could answer a sergeant hurried in, buttoning his blouse. He made for the door at the end of the hall through which the lieutenant had gone, but the captain called to him.

"Oh, sergeant, where is the 79th?"

"The 79th, sir?" The sergeant consulted a book that he drew from his pocket. "They're up in the woods the other side of Toul."

"Who told you they were at Vaucouleurs?" asked the captain, turning to Eadie.

"We have a letter that they'd be at Vaucouleurs until the twelfth of September."

"They've been gone about ten days, sir," said Sergeant Pappas.

"We're all moving up," added the captain. "If you'd come in to-morrow at this time you wouldn't even find

the headquarters here. We're moving to Toul. I wonder how I can get you men back. There's not much doing to-day because it's Sunday, you see. Come back to-morrow and we'll see if we can't give you a ride as far as Toul."

"Thank you, sir," said Eadie. He and Darcy saluted and went out of the door into the hot street again. They went down it aimlessly, for they had nowhere in particular to go and neither wanted to be the first to sit down. When they came to the railroad track, Eadie halted.

"Darcy," said he, "throw that goddamned rifle away."

"I dursn't," said Darcy. "These here things cost money, I ain't kiddin' yuh, an' by the time I paid my insurance an' my allotment an' the blind for losin' govmunt property, an' paid for the rifle, too, I wouldn't have much left. Well, sergeant, what do you think? Do we wait till to-morrow or not?"

"Let's get ourselves a feed first," said Eadie. "It's hard enough to think on an empty stomach. Don't let's forget that you and I are soldiers of the United States army, entitled to three meals a day, a bed, and medical attendance free of charge. Let's go claim our rights. I'm going back to the division and let out a howl for chow."

"They'll tell us to come back at supper-time," said Darcy.

"Well, we don't want to wander around this hole in the ground in the heat looking for food," said Eadie, "and we're liable to strike some hospitable place like we did at Saint Dizier where they don't feed unless you produce travel orders. Maybe there's a Red Cross round here, but those girls have begun to get hard-boiled now and——"

"Listen!" interrupted Darcy. From behind a door in the wall at their back came a sudden sharp sound, a rend-

ing crack. Again the sound was repeated, again and again There came a crash of tinware and a husky voice singing:

"Don't send her away, John, don't send her away,
For she has come back to comfort us, John,
Now that we're old and gray."

"There's some one in there choppin' wood," said Darcy. "What'll yuh bet it's a kitchen?"

Eadie cautiously pushed open the door in the wall. Within was a courtyard, shaded on three sides by sheds. Under one of these sheds was a long table, spoons, cleavers, egg beaters, long forks and other instruments peculiar to kitchens hung in rows from the beams. There was a stove in there, not a rolling kitchen, but a real field range, large and capable looking. Beside it a fat man with his apron rolled up about his waist split wood and hummed a song. As the two entered the fat man straightened his back, searched beneath his apron, and finding a cigar, bit the end off it and then proceeded to light it. As he blew out the first cloud of smoke, his eye lighted on the two newcomers.

"Hi, fellars," said he pleasantly, "been hikin' this afternoon?"

"I'll say we have," said Eadie. "We hiked in from the main line. It was a hot walk. You the cook?"

"I'm the cook," said the fat man. "Maybe you never seen a cook splittin' his own wood. Well, I split mine. This here is corps headquarters mess an' the K. P. is prisoners. They bring 'em over in the mornin' an' leave 'em all day, but bein' it's Sunday they gets the afternoon off an' can walk all over the stockade. That leaves me without no help from dinner until morning. The detail comes over an' washes everything up the first thing Mon-

day morning. So I gotta split my own wood in the heat. My back ain't none too strong anyways."

"I suppose they feed well here," remarked Eadie.

"Feed well? Huh!" The cook spat out a little piece of cigar and, sitting down on a box, took his knee in both hands and leaned back comfortably. "For dinner to-day we had duck, roast duck stuffed with chestnuts. Man, it was good. And where did we get it, says you? Well, we bought it off the Frogs. They all got stuff to sell. Ducks and geese and eggs and milk and all kinds o' stuff. An' the officers I feeds got the jack to buy it with, d'yuh see? Duck an' champagne. It goes good. An' what champagne is left, the waiters splits with me. An' if they don't, they damn soon gets relieved off the detail."

"Is that steak I see there?" asked Darcy.

"That's for to-night," said the cook. "Steak an' French fries. We eats light of a Sunday night." He puffed at his cigar.

Eadie shifted his weight from one sore foot to the other and looked at the steaks hung in the shade, with some big leaves over them to keep the flies off. Roast duck, champagne, chestnuts, steaks! He knew now what it meant to water at the mouth. He could have wept. He tried to think when he and Darcy had eaten last. At Saint Dizier, at Condrecourt? No, at Ligny. At Ligny, the afternoon of the day before, they had stolen a can of hash from the compartment of a passing troop train. Eadie looked at the field range, the wood, and the ax beside it.

"How come you have to split wood this time of day?" he asked.

"Well," said the cook, "some Britishers and Frogs come over to call sometimes of a Sunday afternoon and the officers here serves 'em a drop of tea. I get a little extra

for makin' it an' fixin' up toast an' stuff. They won't give me no prisoners of a Sunday, so I do it myself."

"We haven't had a thing to eat," began Eadie, "since yesterday afternoon. And with the walk we had this morning we've got quite an appetite. We were wondering what the chances might be on a little handout."

"Well," said the cook. He leaned forward, elbows on knees, removed his cigar and regarded the end of it. "Hmmm," said he. His eye wandered to the wood and the ax, and then back to Eadie and Darcy. Again Eadie regarded the wood. He also looked with a bold full glance at those thick red steaks, ready for the frying, peeping coyly from under their green leaves.

"If you'd like to give us a bite," said Eadie, "we wouldn't mind chopping a little wood for you."

"Good," said the cook heartily, "that's fine. Sure, I'll give you fellars a feed. I wouldn't never turn no man away hungry, not if I had to give him my rations myself. There's the wood, grab the ax and turn to. Take off your packs, fellars, an' make yourselves comfortable."

Eadie and Darcy removed their packs and their blouses and took turns at the wood. It was tough, green stuff, and the ax was none too sharp. Eadie chopped until his back ached and he could no longer see from the sweat running into his eyes and then Darcy took hold.

"Well, cook, what do you say?" asked Eadie after awhile. "How much wood do you want? Isn't that enough?"

There was a strong fragrance of lemon in the air. The cook had a tin cup in his hand, into which he gazed, moving the cup in small circles to stir its contents. He drank long and gurglingly. "Ah," said the cook, smacking his lips, "what would a job o' cookin' be without lemon extract?"

"How about the wood?" cried the sergeant. "Isn't that enough?"

The cook rolled a red eye at the pile of chopped wood. "Oh, no," said he, "why, that wouldn't boil a cup o' water. I've got to have more than that."

"You're crazier'n hell," panted Darcy. "Why, there's enough wood there to bake bread for a battalion!"

"Naw, there ain't," said the cook. He inhaled noisily some of the contents of the cup. "Why, I cut more than that myself!"

"We're just out of hospital," said Eadie, "and wood cutting isn't in our line. What do you have to do to make tea but boil a little water?"

"I gotta cook supper, too," said the cook, "an' all that steak to fry. Go on, there's two of yuh. Cut us a little more wood an' I'll give yuh a nice feed."

Eadie took the ax from Darcy and went at the wood again. When his hands felt as though they had been fried and he could see the white heads of blisters beginning to show, he handed the ax to Darcy. Every muscle in his back ached and his head swam from the heat, but he thought of the steaks about to be fried and decided it was worth it. He needed something to bolster his courage and there was nothing like a steak to give a man heart.

"Whaddyuh say?" called Darcy, breathing heavily. "That enough?" He pointed to a really sizeable pile of wood. The cook looked at it grudgingly, and chewed upon the butt of his cigar.

"Yeh, that's enough," he said. Darcy at once dropped the ax and he and Eadie withdrew to the shade of the shed-roof.

"How long do you suppose it'll take him to cook it?" asked Darcy.

"Not long. Steak doesn't take a minute to fry up. I just happened to think he may have some of that duck left over."

"Duck?" cried Darcy, and said no more. The vision of eating duck had removed his power of speech.

The cook had opened a huge box and was rattling therein. He drew out a loaf of bread and cut slices from it. Again his head and shoulders disappeared in the box and more rattling ensued. Eadie decided that the cook was getting out gridirons, forks, and other tools for the proper preparation of steak. The cook put something before him on the table and reached overhead for a cleaver. There was the sound of two sharp blows and the cook came over to the two men.

"Here, fellars," said he, "dig in."

In one hand he extended two slices of bread and in the other a small round object, a tin can with a red label, the top opened in a jagged triangle. Eadie took the can in stupefied amazement and looked into it. There was a mysterious mass of red and black therein, with bits of white bones and pieces of vertebra sticking out.

"What the hell is this?" asked Eadie in a choking voice.

"Canned sammun," said the cook.

"But you're goin' to cook us a steak, too, aren't you?" Eadie tried to wrench his mouth into a grin, but was unsuccessful. Beside him Darcy still inspected the dry bread, turning it over and over as though he expected to find butter or jam on it somewhere.

"Cook a steak?" cried the cook. "Them steaks is for officers. I ain't puttin' out steaks to every bum that comes moochin' a handout. Here I give you a good feed of bread an' sammun an' you want steak, too. If you don't want that sammun, give it back to me an' get the hell out of my kitchen!"

Eadie drew back his hand and hurled the can of salmon

with all his might into the cook's chest. "Take your damned goldfish!" said he. The cook staggered back a step and Darcy, leaping past Eadie, planted his fist on the cook's jaw. The cook went down with a thud. It is not considered the act of a gentleman to hit a man when he is down, much less kick him, yet it was Sergeant Eadie's foot that thumped against the prostrate cook's ribs. It was Darcy, however, who mounted upon the cook's frame and did a little double-time thereon with his hobnails. The cook began to bellow.

"Give me that goldfish, Darcy," said Eadie calmly. He reached out and took the can and as the cook struggled to his feet, calmly knocked him down again. "It's Sunday," said the sergeant, "and there aren't many people around. Hold his hands, Darcy."

Eadie thereupon sat astride the cook's chest and while Darcy held the other's hands, Eadie gagged the cook with a few handsful of goldfish, and then proceeded to rub the rest of the contents of the can into the cook's hair, eyes and ears. This was quite painful, for army goldfish was full of bones, quite sharp and strong. The cook writhed. He made gurgling sounds. Though he had been taken by surprise, the cook was no weakling and he succeeded in wrenching his hands free from Darcy at last.

"Let's be going," said the sergeant, evading a wild grab for his face by one of the cook's waving hands. Eadie realized that he and Darcy were weak from hospital and that their strength was furthermore undermined by lack of food so that once the cook got free he might make it interesting for them. Moreover, they might be taken by the police. The cook got to his feet, and wheezing and choking, coughed goldfish from his throat and dug it out of his eyes and ears. At last he could see and speak. A prolonged howl for help was his first act. Then

he made for the table and seized a cleaver. Again he yelled and looked about for his antagonists. They had disappeared.

"Sons o' bitches," gasped the cook. "They can't get outta town." He started for the house at the end of the court at a staggering run.

In the street on the other side of the wall, Eadie and Darcy ran heavily along, carrying their packs in one hand and their blouses in the other.

"Stop a minute," panted Darcy, "I can't carry this rifle an' pack both. T'hell with the rifle like you told me to. If we get caught we'll get hung anyways." He cast the rifle from him and then he and the sergeant went on again. They turned down a street that led between garden walls, a back alley, unpaved. They stopped and listened, holding their gasping breaths. There was a distant clamor, a far-off howling, in the intervals of which the two could distinguish the words, "Thieves! Hey, crooks! M. P.'s up!"

"It's the cook," said Eadie, grinning. "Thank God, it's Sunday. He won't raise much of a crowd. Let's put on our blouses and packs, we're honest citizens. Now, if any one wants to know what the row is about, we don't know."

"Let's get outta town," said Darcy. "I feel nervous here. We want to go to Toul, don't we? Well, let's find the road."

"How's your courage?" asked Eadie.

"Good. Man, I feel better after passin' that bird a beatin'. The idea o' him puttin' out goldfish to a coupla wounded guys back from hospital! I can do a heap o' walkin' to save myself a month or so on the rockpile."

They continued down the street to its end, and into the highroad that crossed there. There were some soldiers idling at the far end of the road, there was a res-

taurant with more soldiers sitting before it, but none of them showed any interest in the two strangers. Eadie went boldly up to one of the tables.

"Which is the road to Toul, fellars?" he asked.

"Huh?" said the men, "the road to Toul? Hey, Tommy, ask one o' them despatch riders which is the road to Toul."

"Down the other side o' the town," called some one from the interior of the restaurant. "It goes out by the M. P. barracks."

"Sure, that's right," said several. "It goes out the east side of the town. You can't miss it."

"How far is it?" asked Eadie.

"How far is it, Tommy?"

"Twenty-five kilometers," answered the invisible Tommy.

Eadie's heart sank. They could never make it before night. Twenty-five kilometers meant about fifteen miles, more than a day's march for him and his tired companion. He and Darcy went slowly away. They walked down a seemingly endless paved street, came to the thickly populated part of the town and then made a circle to the east, to try to come on the road to Toul outside the town. They had no desire to pass the police barracks. They came out on the edge of a meadow, on the far side of which was a long row of trees, stretching away out of sight to the northeast.

"I'll bet that's the road," said Eadie. "It looks like a main road and it goes in the right direction."

They crossed the hot field, mopping their brows, and at last arrived at the edge of the road. They could see at one end the last houses of the town, but the other, far, far away, simply narrowed down to a point and disappeared. It was going to be a tremendous effort to walk any further that day and the barren fields offered little

inducement to linger in the vicinity. The two men sat down on their packs and looked sadly at their new shoes. These shoes were not yet broken in and hence made their feet sore.

"We're getting closer all the time," said Eadie. "We're bound to find the outfit some day."

"Yeh, some day," agreed Darcy. "When we were three or four hundred miles from the outfit it didn't seem half as far off as it does now when we ain't but ten or twelve."

Eadie stood up and looked about for a mile-post. These posts were really kilometer posts, being placed on the French highways every kilometer, and giving the distance to the nearest towns and the number of the highway. Eadie remembered sadly that if this was indeed the road to Toul and that if there was a town between him and that city, the post would give the distance to the next town and say nothing about Toul, so that Eadie, having no map, would not be any better off than before.

"Here comes a motorcycle guy," called Darcy, "we can ask him." He pointed to a cloud of dust approaching from the direction of the town, in front of which could be seen the thin shape of a motorcycle with its rider.

The motorcycle approached, slowed down, and as Darcy stood up to hail its rider, the machine stopped. The rider wheeled it to the side of the road, and kicked its stand into place with a sweep of his foot. The rider of the machine was a large, husky soldier, a very capable looking gun swung from his hip, and his arm bore the blue brassard with two white letters, large and glaring—M. P.

"Oh, misery!" muttered Eadie. The halting of this policeman boded the wanderers no good. It would mean a request to be shown the authority for their wander-

ing at large, and like Simple Simon, indeed they had not any. The military policeman approached.

"Are you the two guys that beat up the cook?" asked he.

"What cook?" countered Eadie.

The M. P. grinned. "I ain't askin' officially," said he, "but just as one guy to another. That bird has been sufferin' for a rubbin' down for some time. Come clean, now, ain't you two the ones that slipped it to him? You answer the description, two tough guys, salvage uniforms, phony wound stripe, toughest one a sergeant."

"Well," said Eadie, "we had a few words with a guy back there—I don't know about his being a cook."

"He's a cook, all right," said the M. P. "He cooks for the big two-star boys that hang around corps headquarters. Any other cook you could beat up an' nothin' said, but you go banging around the kitchen-pet of one o' these here generals, an' there's a wild cry out for yuh. Have a cigarette?"

"Thanks," said Eadie. He and Darcy took the proffered cigarettes, tailor-mades, too, and lighted them in silence. What did all this apparent friendliness on the part of the M. P. portend?

"Well," said the M. P., "I'm out lookin' for yuh an' givin' the glad news to every patrol we got out. You better dust outta this area, I ain't kiddin'. Tell me, is it true yuh knocked him down and kicked the liver out of him?"

"Somethin' like that," said Darcy. "He got us to chop up a cord o' wood an' said he'd give us a feed for it an' then he issued out a can o' goldfish."

"That's him," said the M. P. "He used to cook for our detail. Well, he got promoted to be cook for the corps mess an' we got all set to live off the fat o' the land. Why, we give him a blow-out the night he left that set

us back near a month's pay apiece. So then about a week later, when he'd never come near us, a couple of us went up to pay him a call. He was sittin' in the shed pickin' away at what was left of a roast suckin' pig. Well, in two words, he didn't offer us none an' we asked for it, an' maybe said some hard words. What does he do but turn us in for botherin' him an' hangin' round his kitchen! An' on the charge sheet is endorsed by old Turkeyface himself, 'Severe sentence.' We're still payin' the blind. By God!" cried the M. P., "lemme shake hands with you guys! He said you broke every bone in his body almost."

He shook hands violently with Darcy and Eadie. "Now then," said he, "you wanta get away from here. Listen, now, there's a ration truck goin' up to Toul in about ten minutes. I saw it loadin' when I come out. I'll curve back to town an' tell 'em to be on the lookout for yuh. Jump in an' stay outta sight. No one'll look for yuh in Toul. You could stay in Vaucouleurs till hell froze before any of our guys would bother yuh, but there's too much rank behind that cook. We'd all get put on the honey cart an' that wouldn't help you nor us either. Well, s' long, I'll go back an' fix it up with the truck driver to give yuh a ride an' then I'll be on my way again."

He mounted his motorcycle, swung it about, and was gone. In a little while he was back again and shouted encouragingly to them as he went by. A few minutes later a truck followed that came to a groaning halt as the two wanderers waved their arms at it.

"You two the guys that beat up the cook?" called the driver.

"That's us," answered Eadie.

"Well, get in the back," directed the driver, "an' holler when you're in."

The two boosted each other in over the tailgate, yelled to the driver, and away they went.

"Well, can you tie that?" asked Darcy, when they were well under way, tucking his pack under him to ease the bouncing of the truck a little. "Every one in this country is our friend because we beat up the cook. He must have been mean as dogwood and twice as nasty."

"Boy," said Eadie, "when that M. P. shook hands with me I was more surprised than if Kaiser Bill himself had done it. Why, think of the drag he would have had with the general if he'd arrested the men that had banged the general's cook! I know one mess that will eat poor for a few weeks."

"Hey!" bellowed a voice from the front of the truck, "you birds hungry?"

"That's our middle name," answered Eadie. "We're always hungry."

"There s a case o' jam open and some bread in a bag there," yelled back the man. "Dig in."

The two opened the jam, helped themselves to a loaf of bread and ate heartily. The truck bounced over the road, its cargo of rations creaked and banged, and the sideboards rattled merrily. Night fell, and it began to rain while they were still on the way.

"This is luck," said Eadie, "but you remember all the time that we've been on the way, just as everything looked the blackest, all of a sudden it all straightened out. Here we are, riding along in our own auto, a full belly and a dry skin. I'd hate to be under a haystack to-night."

"We ain't there yet," said Darcy. "This is too good to last."

"Well, let's enjoy it while it does," said Eadie.

The truck rattled on, the rain drove against the cover, they halted while the driver held conversation with unseen men, and they proceeded again. Traffic became thicker and Eadie could tell when they were at a cross-roads by the free comment of the driver and his as-

sistant and the faint, yet bitter replies of unseen soldiers.

"We're gettin' near the front," said Darcy, peering out the back. "These trucks are all runnin' without lights." Hardly had he said this when the truck lurched violently several times and then came to a halt.

"Ditched!" decided Eadie. He waited for the driver to burst into profanity, but he heard them climbing down from their perch in silence. "What's the matter?" he asked, as two dripping figures appeared at the tailgate.

"Nothin'," said one of them. "This is as far as we go."

"Is this Toul?" cried Eadie.

"Yep," replied the driver, climbing into the truck, "this is Toul."

"Do you suppose we could sleep in the truck to-night?" asked Eadie.

"Sure," said the driver, "there's room in here for a million."

He and his companion had bedding rolls like officers, which they unrolled on top of the load. Eadie and Darcy, however, had nothing but their blankets and overcoats. They put these down and, using their gas masks for pillows, wiggled around like snakes to find a place where they could lie and escape the sharp corners of the ration cases.

"I'll bet you a month's pay we find the outfit to-morrow," said Eadie.

"Huh!" replied the other. In the front part of the truck cigarettes glowed where the driver and his assistant were having their good-night smoke. They must have eaten their supper before they left Vaucouleurs, or else on the seat on the way up.

"Wasn't it lucky we got out of Vaucouleurs so smoothly," said Eadie.

"I bet I get a blind yet for throwin' my rifle away," remarked Darcy. "I could have carried it a cinch in the

truck. Maybe I can swipe another. They ought to be plenty around if they're all as heavy as mine. It was one o' them Enfields. They probably cost more than a Springfield, they're bigger. I wonder if the bayonet I got would fit a Springfield? Most like not. Will a Enfield bayonet fit a Springfield?"

Hearing no reply, Darcy turned upon his side. "Hey, sergeant," he said softly. Silence. "Ah, he's poundin' his ear already. Sergeants is great guys for sleepin'." He rolled back and in a minute or two was asleep himself.

Chapter II

FIELD ORDERS 36. VERY SECRET

IN the morning rain still fell, bucketing down slantwise before a cold wind. The fall rains were beginning and the heavy heat of the day before had been a sure precursor of a spell of cold rain. The two wanderers looked sadly out of the truck. They were in the yard of a great caserne, a barrack square surrounded by high buildings, empty now and cheerless. A long line of trucks like their own was waiting to unload.

"Where do you go from here?" Eadie asked the driver.

"We unload an' go back to Vaucouleurs."

"Do they put out any breakfast here?"

"Nope, only what we had last night. Bread an' jam. There's some beans there if you want 'em. Some likes beans for breakfast."

"I can stand 'em," said Eadie. "If you spread 'em on bread they aren't bad. Well, we'll eat on you again if you don't mind an' then we'll drift. How far are we from the center of the town?"

"Not far. Drag your tail down the main stem and across the railroad bridge and you'll see the town gate. What place do you want?"

"I don't know," said Eadie, "but I thought I'd go in and ask the billeting officer where the 79th Field Artillery is. Ever hear of 'em?"

"No," said the driver, "I never did. But there's ten million outfits around here. Black Jack himself never heard of half of 'em."

"Come on," called Eadie, "grab up your pack, Darcy, and we'll dust out of here."

"Can't we leave our packs here and come back for 'em?" asked Darcy. "My shoulders got cuts in 'em you could put your hand into, I ain't kiddin' yuh."

"Darcy, I'm surprised at you. A man of your service wanting to leave his pack loose. Man, we wouldn't be outside the gate before the pack would fade away. A snowman in hell wouldn't disappear half so quick."

"Aw, what would these truck drivers want with our blankets an' extra shoes?" objected Darcy. "They got lots of their own."

"There's Algerians to sell them to, aren't there?" demanded the sergeant. "And another reason for taking them is that if we saw a quick chance to get away if we met a truck or something going up to the outfit, we wouldn't want to come back here for our packs. I can see the driver waiting for us while we did it."

"You win," said Darcy, "us for where the town major hangs out."

They went across the yard and out the main gate of the caserne. There was a mirror there, a huge, full length affair, so that the conscripts of other days could see how they looked when they strolled out on a Sunday afternoon. The two Americans did not pause before it. They took no pride in their appearance. Their hair was long, their hands and faces begrimed with coal dust from riding in trains, and road dust from pounding the highways. Their uniforms happily were covered by their slickers, which, put on over their packs, gave them a decidedly hump-backed appearance.

The two went down the hill, knowing that this must lead to the center of the town. They passed a great many French soldiers, a few Americans, and saw some Italian gendarmes, clad in gray-green uniforms, with flowing

capes and strange, huge, cocked hats. They crossed the bridge above the railroad and so came to the old-fashioned city gate.

"Look at the M. P.," said Darcy in a whisper, indicating a man in a slicker who twirled a club under the porch of a sort of guardhouse.

"Never mind him," replied Eadie under his breath. "Keep right on going, just as though he didn't mean anything to you." The driving rain gave the two an excuse to keep their heads down and they proceeded stolidly through the gate.

"Hey?" yelled the M. P. The two stopped. "Hey, where you guys goin'?"

"Down town," said Eadie. "We want to find the billeting officer."

"Got a pass?"

"You don't need a pass to come from one barracks to another," countered Eadie boldly.

"Maybe not," said the M. P., "but you need one to get through this gate. Got one?"

"No," answered Eadie.

The M. P. waved his club in a gesture that said, "Outside, bum!" as plainly as if he had spoken it. The two turned without comment and retraced their steps. On the railroad bridge they halted by common consent and leaned against the railing.

"Don't it beat all!" said Darcy. "You an' me a coupla wounded guys tryin' to get back to the front. You'd think every one would give us a hand. But us! 'How's chances on a flop for the night?' 'Git t'hell outta here!' 'Hey, guy, where's the Third Division hang out?' 'Show me your pass an' I'll tell yuh.' 'Ain't got no pass.' 'Git t'hell outta here!'"

"They're all sore at us," said Eadie. "When I was in hospital I read an article in a magazine about how happy

the boys were in France with their theaters, their games, their good wholesome food, their clean, well-kept hospitals, their healthy happy life with one another, how friendly they all were. The article let on that the officers tucked us into bed and heard our prayers every night."

"Some of it *sounds* like prayin'," said Darcy. "No, I ain't seen a theayter since I was in France an' the only white woman that spoke to me was that Limey truck driver in Saint Dizier. She stalled her car. 'Will ye give it a twist?' she says. So I give it a twist and just then a ambulance goes by and let's a shower o' mud go all over me an' the Limey girl, too. Boy, she said some words *I* never heard before. Man, that girl could speak, I ain't kiddin'."

"How's your courage?" asked Eadie suddenly.

"Good, why?"

"Game for a hike in the rain?"

"Sure, it's better than sittin' here bitin' our thumbs an' wonderin' when we eat."

"Well," said Eadie, "here comes a Frog and I'm going to ask him where the front is."

A French soldier was walking briskly across the bridge and him Eadie hailed. "Hey!" called Eadie. "Where's the front?"

The French soldier halted and waved a hand toward the scenery.

"Yes, yes, I know," said Eadie, "but how do we get there?"

"Ah," said the French soldier, waving his forefinger back and forth, "pas bon!"

"Combien de kilometres?" asked Eadie.

"Ah, twentee-five kilos," said the Frenchman.

"Oh, God," groaned Eadie, "this guy is going to show me he can speak English!"

"Two road," continued the other. He held two fingers before Eadie's eyes. "One over there. One, here. One over there, Bernecourt, one here, Boucq."

"What do you mean, one here?" asked Eadie.

"There," said the French soldier, still in English. "You turn there, by beeg tree, turn to our left hand," plainly indicating a right-hand turn all the time, "and you come to front. Far, far, twentee-five kilos." He waved both hands with fingers extended twice, and then waggled his right hand again.

"Thanks," said Eadie, "we know where the road is anyway."

"I thought you were a shark at French," remarked Darcy when the French soldier had departed.

"Oh, boy, they're dumb, these French," said Eadie bitterly. "I can speak just as good French almost as they can, but the minute they see my uniform they make up their minds they can't understand a word I say, or else they want to show me they can speak English. I'd be only too glad to speak English to them if I could understand what they said in it. And did you hear this boob? Me speaking perfectly good French to him, and him answering me in pigeon English?"

"Every one gets in a panic that way," said Darcy. "I mind when we was at Cokeydawn I give a Frog ten francs to have me have his uniform and I went to Rennes in it. Well, I spent a month's pay in peace for once. But what I meant to say, a looey from the ammunition train comes up to me about three A.M. and starts readin' stuff at me out of a little book. I was just drunk enough to answer in English. 'What does the lieutenant want?' says I. An' he reads some more about Oo ay le gare, je voospree, monseer. 'The gare I don't know about,' says I, 'but anything else in Rennes you want to see I can tell you

where it is.' He never got a word of what I said. He shuts up the book and goes off wavin' his hands."

"Maybe he had a few drinks under his belt, too," said Eadie. "Well, let's go again. I found out the way to the front and somewhere between here and Germany we ought to find an outfit that'll give two good soldiers a job until they find their own."

At sunset of the same day the rain had ceased, but the sky was still lowering, the wind rustled the wet leaves, and a chill cold damp was on all the countryside. Darcy and Eadie tramped through the mud. They had that day progressed twenty-two kilometers, riding in trucks, on empty caissons, bareback on horses that nearly clove them in two, in French country carts, and lastly on a tank. They had come to a thickly wooded section, into the depths of whose forests went narrow roads, new, and bearing the marks of much traffic.

"It's comin' on to get dark," said Darcy. "Would you mind tellin' a guy where you expect to flop in these wet woods?"

"When I smell a kitchen," said the sergeant, "then I quit. We're among regular troops. I just saw an ammunition cart that belongs to the Sixteenth Infantry. I have more hopes of them than of the other kind."

"We're gettin' closer to the front all the time," said Darcy, trying to shift his pack to a more comfortable position. "Kitchens an' everything will be hid in the woods. I think we ought to duck down one o' these roads —what the hell is bitin' you now?"

The sergeant had darted to one side of the road and was looking into the air with intense earnestness.

"What's the matter?" asked Darcy again.

"Come here," said Eadie, "and see if you see what I do."

Darcy complied and found the sergeant looking at a piece of new wood, half the top of a box in which canned goods had been packed, for the marks of the bottoms of the cans were still visible. On the wood, in straggling black letters were the words, "70th F. A. Post of Command." Underneath an arrow pointed down one of the narrow roads.

"It ain't real," said Darcy. The two soldiers looked up the road into the woods. It curved away out of sight, it was muddy and ran through pools of water. Leaves, torn from the trees by the wind, lay scattered in it.

"Sure, it's real," said the sergeant. "We haven't had a drink for weeks. Our outfit's down this road, Darcy, what d'you think of that for luck?"

"I don't believe it," said Darcy firmly.

"Well, we'll go see." The two of them splashed their way down the road. Beyond the first turn a confused murmur became audible and after another minute's walking, they could see a sort of park under the trees, wagons half covered with tarpaulins, a picket line, the horses tethered thereon kicking and squealing. Men moved about among the trees, not idly, but quickly and nervously, some even at a run. Fadie and Darcy turned in the direction of the picket line and discovered that the underbrush was thick with shelter tents.

"Well, if it ain't Sployd!" cried Darcy suddenly.

"Well, if it ain't Darcy an' Sergeant Fadie!" cried the man addressed as Sployd. "When did yuh get back? By God, if you ain't more welcome than a month's pay!"

"Had supper yet?" asked the sergeant, wringing the other's hand.

"Sure, long ago," said Sployd. "I'm a busy man. I'll see you fellars in a second. There's the old gun crew, Darcy, wheelin' that gun outta line there. Most of the old gang is left. I'll see yuh in a minute."

"Where's the Old Man?" asked the sergeant. "We've got to report to him and then we'll see about chow."

"His tent's over there under that big tree," said Sloyd, pointing. "Well, I gotta hurry away." He shook hands again and hastily took his departure.

"Every one's in a rush," said Eadie. "They must be going to have an inspection. You go over and parley with the gun crew, Darcy, and I'll go tell the Old Man his two prodigals have come home. It's not much later than five o'clock. They're rather early with chow."

"Tell the Old Man we haven't had anything since breakfast," said Darcy. "I'll see if I can't hit these hombres up for some chow."

"Good, I'll be back in a minute."

The sergeant gave a feeble brush or two at the mud on his slicker, hooked it together a little more neatly, and started in the direction of the big tree. Men hailed him gayly from time to time, all the old gang he had known on the Marne before he had been wounded, other men, whose faces were new to him, looked at him curiously. The sergeant paused at a shelter tent from which protruded a pair of feet in officer's boots. The sergeant coughed slightly and a face peered out.

"By God!" cried the owner of the face, "it's Sergeant Eadie back again. Well, well. You always come back at the opportune moment. I'll bet the police are at your heels this time, too." The boots scraped on the ground and their owner emerged, a tall man wearing the insignia of a captain of field artillery. He shook hands violently with Sergeant Eadie. "Speak of the devil," continued the captain, "and he always appears. I was just this minute wishing you were here and thinking you were somewhere in hospital goldbricking your time away. Yessir and be damn! I'm glad to see you. Have you got a gun?"

"Yes, sir," said Eadie, a little mystified.

"Got any bullets for it?"

"No, sir."

"Well, get some pronto. Hang a first-aid packet on yourself, get a can of bully beef to put in your pocket, and drag yourself over to Lieutenant Sawyer. He's got the only other map of the sector. Commit it to memory, sergeant! Ah, boy! I'm glad you're back. I see my way clear now. Young Mack will figure fire dope and Finn can be liaison sergeant. Well, on your way now, snap! One hour is all you've got!"

"Sir," said Eadie, "I haven't had anything to eat all day. Could I wait on the map until after I've eaten?"

The captain's lips shut firmly and he turned a cold gaze upon the sergeant. The captain had blue eyes, as expressionless as the muzzle of a pistol and fully as alarming.

"We're starting a drive to-night, sergeant," said he. "The battery moves at six P.M."

"Ah," said the sergeant, "I see. Good. I'll get right at the map."

"Report to me when the battery moves out," directed the captain. Eadie saluted and went away.

Out of sight of the big tree he removed his slicker, removed his pack, and drew and examined his pistol. It had been issued to him in the replacement camp and was new, still gummy with the cosmoline in which it had been stored. It would probably jam on him the first shot, thought Eadie. He would have to find some kerosene and clean it. An hour! So many things to do! All of the weariness that he had fought against throughout the wet muddy march since they had left Toul descended on him at once. His gas mask was new and would taste of sulphur. The eye-pieces must be greased. A drive! Eadie knew what a drive meant. He had been in one on the

Marne. It meant no food, no sleep for days on end, and fighting, fighting, all the time. It meant seeing men killed and lying down beside their unburied bodies to wait for the boche to tire of shooting machine guns and flares; it meant hunting infantry at night in black woods, alone. He must draw ammunition, lots of it! And he did not know a foot of the sector! Five minutes of the hour had already gone.

"Hi, Eadie, home again?" cried a voice. A man called Ham, who was a machine gunner, extended his hand to Eadie. "What's that on your sleeve?" cried Ham.

"A wound stripe," said Eadie. "Don't you know what a wound stripe looks like?"

"Was you wounded?" grinned Ham. "I heard you went over the hill."

"I went over feet first," said Eadie. "I hear we're going to pull off a drive."

"Sure'n hell are," said Ham, "on Metz. Tough fight, gonna be. Well, I'm glad you come back all right even if it does screw me outta my new stripes."

"How come?"

"I just got made," said Ham sadly, displaying a sleeve with a brand new set of sergeant's chevron, "but now you come back we'll have more sergeants than we're allowed an' me bein' dub, I'll probably get broke again."

"Not much chance," said Eadie. "I'll be the one. I don't know whether a man holds his stripes all the time he's gone or not."

"I guess he does," said Ham. "Anyway they won't bust *you*. You're rankest N. C. O. now. If Mulcahy gets a commission you'll be first sergeant. Well, I got to rustle along. I'm drawing pistol ammunition for the gunners."

"Good," said Eadie, "I'll go with you. I've got to get

some pistol bullets, too. Your machine guns do any shooting now, or are they still using you for a fatigue detail?"

"I'll say we shoot," said Ham. "When we was at Le Charmel we kept off a flock o' planes for two hours. Boy, we burned up ammunition that morning."

"Bring any down?"

"One," said Ham. He grinned. "We found out afterward it was an American. Never mind, I been wantin' to sock one o' them fresh aviators for a long time."

In the center of a pile of freshly opened boxes sat a distracted looking man. About him were clustered several others protesting. The distracted man's face was wrinkled, his curly hair was fading away from the top of his head, and he was older by ten years than the oldest soldier about him. His name was Cokey Mullins and he fulfilled the duties of supply sergeant to the battery, though he had been reduced to the grade of private several months ago. The other men greeted Eadie and Cokey gave vent to a hoarse laugh.

"Here's Eadie back again. How's Eadie? Did they kick you out of that hospital?"

"Sure," said Eadie, "you don't think I'd come back otherwise, do you? Give us about a hundred rounds of pistol ammunition."

"Whoa, boy!" cried Cokey. "R'ar back there! Hundred rounds! Man, who are you? Listen to him, boys!"

"Never mind listenin' to him, Coke," said one of the others. "Give us our bullets. We got somethin' to do besides monkey with you."

The other men were section chiefs, evidently drawing pistol ammunition for their men. Coke thrust his hand into a burlap bag and began counting. Eadie did not pay a great deal of attention. He was thinking what next had to be done. His gun must be cleaned, gas mask

prepared, some food put in his stomach and some in his pack, and the map! The sector had to be learned by heart, the roads, where they came from and whither they went, the names and heights of all hills, the names of all woods and farmhouses, the location of the enemy lines, and the approximate ranges of any good aiming points behind them. Eadie's job with the battery had been a combination of observer and liaison sergeant. The guns, firing on the enemy from some concealed point, could not see the target. Some one, therefore, must be where he could see the falling shells and correct the aim of the guns if necessary. This job had been Eadie's. In addition, when any infantry sent back a request for fire, but neglected to send their location, it was Eadie's task to go out and find said infantry and then locate them accurately on the map, so that the battery, in giving the requested fire, would not shoot up the infantry it intended to aid. And to locate units quickly and accurately, a man must have a very good idea of the country in which he is operating. The mistaking of one farmhouse for another, of a road running east and west for a parallel road a half mile further on, is a slight thing indeed and on a dark night in blinding rain might be made by any one, but such a mistake in time of war means a lot of unnecessary deaths, possible loss of a position, and even the failure of a general attack.

"And me," said Eadie aloud, "I've got half an hour to memorize the map in."

"What you want, Sergeant Eadie?" asked Cokey.

"Some bullets, and make it snappy."

Cokey Mullins reached into a burlap bag and brought out a handful of pistol ammunition, from which he counted ten cartridges. These he handed to Eadie.

"Ten!" said Eadie.

"Ten," repeated Coke, "yes, ten. You speak like you reckoned to get more."

"You don't mean to say that you're going to send me into battle with ten shells, do you?"

"That's all he's givin' any one," said Ham, who still lingered.

"You don't mean to say that I've got to start a drive with ten cartridges, do you?" cried Eadie. "Why, my God, I could shoot all that off at one boche."

"That's all you get," said Cokey, tying up the neck of the sack. "There ain't much here and the Old Man says ten rounds per man. Whoop! Run along now, little boy!"

"Listen," said Eadie, "these gunners don't need pistol ammunition any more than a toad needs a pocket. If the boche got close enough to them to use pistols, they'd take wings to themselves like a bird. But I've got to run around out there in the woods all alone!"

"You tryin' to tell me you'd stay an' shoot it out with a boche? Ho! Ho! Sergeant Eadie, you'll kill me laughin'. Ten rounds per man, them's orders. If you shoot all them off at a German, you come back and I'll give you more."

"Time flies," said Ham.

Eadie pocketed his ammunition and followed Ham away from the pile of boxes. The horses were being led from the picket line and harnessed to the guns and a number of men were lashing tarpaulins on the fourgon, a small four-wheeled wagon that seemed filled to bursting.

"They better get a move on with those others," said Eadie, pointing to the huge slat wagon, another fourgon, and a two-wheeled cart like a dump cart. These wagons were still in line, the harness on the poles, covered with tarpaulins.

"They ain't going," said Ham. "Nothing goes forward but the firing battery and one fourgon with instruments, my guns, and as much field gun ammo as they can get into it."

"I'm going to get some food!" said Eadie suddenly. "If the kitchen doesn't go, then there ought to be some chow left. I've got a million things to do, but the first and most important now is to eat. The best knowledge of the country in the world won't help a man if he collapses from hunger. And I haven't had the oat bag on since morning."

"Where yuh going to march?" asked Ham.

"With the machine gunners," said Eadie, "my old gang of thugs."

"Good," said Ham, "you an' me an' the gunners will follow up the fourgon like we always do. See yuh later." Ham looked at his watch. "Boy, we got fifteen minutes. I gotta step." He darted away at a run.

Eadie wended his way toward the end of the encampment farthest from the picket line. Here he knew the kitchen would be and, sure enough, under a dirty tarpaulin he found the chow gun, a greasy table, and the cook, smoking a cigarette.

"How's chances on a feed, Joe?" called the sergeant.

"Well, if it ain't Eadie. Heard you was dead. Come in. Got some slum left and coffee and bread and jam. How's that suit you?"

"Fine," said Eadie, "only make it fast, because we move out of here in a few minutes."

"Got it right here," said the cook. He ladled slum into Eadie's messkit, gave him a can half full of jam, and handed him several slices of bread. "Mug o' Java," said the cook, filling Eadie's cup, "an' there you are. Well, how are yuh? What happened to you up on the Marne? We heard all kinds o' yarns. First off when you didn't

come back we heard you was gone home to the states to be a officer. They had it all round the regiment. Then we heard you bumped off a shavetail outta the machine guns. Last we heard you an' Collins an' Mike Sergovsky an' Red Sloan was all killed in a heap."

"Most of it's true," said Eadie, gulping coffee. "I was up on the front and some of the gang from the battalion were up there orienting. They told me I was detailed to go home. So then I started on the run for the battery and met Sloan and the rest of them waiting at a crossroads. We took a short cut across a field." Eadie paused, his eye looking into space, his mind on that red night above the Marne. "We heard it coming," resumed Eadie, "and we flopped. 'Lie down,' says the nurse to me, 'you're at Jouy-sur-Morin.' The next I knew I was on a hospital train. Joe, if you want to know what fun is, you want to ride on a hospital train, three in a bunk, said bunk being built for one."

"Are you a member of this battery?" asked a disagreeable voice.

Eadie looked up. An officer stood before him, a thin man, with a nervous petulant mouth, angry eyes, and the air of a spoiled child looking for some one to bully.

"Yes, sir," said Eadie.

"What do you mean by loafing in the kitchen when we're all trying so hard to get away on time? Why haven't you eaten your supper long ago?"

"I just rejoined, sir," said Eadie.

"Where have you been?"

"I've just come back from hospital, sir." Eadie shifted his arm ever so slightly so that the officer might see the wound stripe.

"Where were you hit?" asked the officer.

"I wasn't hit, I was gassed."

"Oh," said the officer. There was a short pause. "Have you authority to wear that wound stripe?"

"No, sir," said Eadie, "but I expect——"

"Well, you'd better take it off then. Hurry and finish your meal and do some work. I daresay you've done little enough the past month or so." The officer walked coldly away.

"For God's sake, who is that?" gasped Eadie. "Where the hell did he come from?"

"Oh, don't mind him, he's simple," said the cook, throwing away his cigarette and starting to pick his teeth with a splinter. "Name's Connor. I think they got him off a salvage pile somewhere."

"What's his job?" asked Eadie. "He throw any weight around?"

"Naw. Shavetail. In charge o' the echelon now, wheeled transport an' the like o' that."

"He your boss?" asked Eadie, attacking the slum again.

"Huh!" said the cook, "he thought he was. I had a shin bone cookin' here the other mornin' an' he says to me, 'What's for dinner to-day?' Sye, 'Soup.' ' 'Taint enough,' says he. Sye, 'I'm takin' orders from the mess sergeant.' 'Don't be insubordinate,' says he. Sye, 'This here is a regular outfit an' there ain't but two men rates hell-high round this kitchen. Them's the battery commander an' the mess sergeant.' 'We'll see about that,' says he. Sye, 'Do! There's the captain's tent right over there under that big tree.' Well, sergeant, he went over there and his ears was red as fire. Well, when he come out, they was redder'n ever. Why, goddamn *him!*" cried the cook, throwing away his toothpick and leaping to his feet, "I was slingin' hash in this man's army before he was pupped!"

"Don't mind him," said Eadie, "he's simple." He started to laugh and choked on a piece of bread.

"I ain't riled," said the cook, "I'm just tellin' you about it."

"I'm glad he's staying here," said Eadie. "There'll be enough things at the front to bother me. Look, can you let me have a can of hardtack and some canned willy? I want to take them along in my musette."

"That shavey won't go nowheres near the front," said the cook, rummaging for the hardtack and willy, "there are too many soldadoes eager an' willin' to let go a slug at him. There! There goes the whistles. I'm glad I'm a cook. It's gonna be a wet night."

"Damn it," muttered Eadie. He stood up and put the can of hardtack and the canned willy into his musette. Whistles were blowing all over the woods, he could hear the rattling bang of the gun carriages forming column on the road, and the hoarse cries of the dismounted men answering to their names as the roll was called. "So long, Joe," said the sergeant.

"Good luck," replied the cook. "Bring us back a few souvenirs."

Eadie ran to where he had left his pack and found the fourgon already drawn out on the road with the machine gunners grouped behind it.

"Come on, Eadie," called Ham. "Leave your pack. Orders is to leave packs, they come up later if we're in need of 'em. Shove it under that tarpaulin over there with the rest of 'em. Got your name on it?"

"Sure has," said Eadie, untying his overcoat from the pack. "That isn't such a bad order. I won't have to hike all night with a full pack. Oh, hell, that damned map!" The sergeant looked desperately around for Lieutenant Sawyer, the officer to whom the captain had directed him to report to memorize the map. He discovered

the officer, already mounted, moving down the road. The sergeant pursued him.

"Oh, lieutenant," he gasped, "I'm supposed to memorize the sector and I couldn't get a second to do it until now. Could I borrow your map while there's a little daylight left?"

"Hullo, sergeant," said the lieutenant, leaning from the saddle to shake hands. "It wouldn't do you any good to borrow the map now, you couldn't see, and we won't be allowed any light. I wouldn't dare lend it to you, because it's the only fire map we've got."

"Oh, man!" muttered the sergeant helplessly.

"It isn't really necessary for you to bone the map," said the lieutenant, moving out again. "Don't worry. Have you got a first aid packet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's all you need."

With a loud cry from the different drivers and the slapping of whips the column began to move. Six-thirty exactly. In those days of thousands of men and few roads, columns were scheduled and routed like railroad trains and they must move with the same regularity. A commanding officer that moved out his column five minutes late was liable to lose his job, for other columns were waiting to use the same road and would move out from different places with the expectation of finding the road clear when they got to it. If it wasn't clear, they would have to wait and others behind them, with the result that all would be confusion and delay and some units would arrive at their destinations after daylight, with the consequent danger of discovery by the enemy. Often at a certain hour a narrow road, wide enough for one-way traffic only, would be switched from north-bound to south-bound columns. And if the north-bound column was late, and the south-bound column started on

time—as it would have to—things would be interesting. There are few worse places in the world to be than on a narrow road near the front in the small hours of the morning, when a mile long column of trucks has encountered a mile long column of field artillery going in the opposite direction. If the enemy starts to shell the road about the time that the two columns meet, joy will reign supreme.

The battery turned out onto the main road. There was a little knot of men gathered there to take a last look at the departing troops and among these Eadie recognized Coke Mullins, the supply sergeant.

"Whadda yuh say on some more ammunition?" called Ham.

"Can't give it to you boys to waste. Whoop! Ammunition costs money."

"He's going to keep it to sell to the Algerians," said Eadie. The chorus of jeers that followed this remark nettled the supply sergeant.

"What's that on your arm, Eadie?" replied Coke with a red face.

"It's something you'll never wear," yelled back the sergeant.

"Right," agreed Ham. "Get in your hole, Coke, the soldiers are goin' to war. Come up to-morrow and souvenir what's left of us."

The column rattled and bumped along the road northward. It began to rain and Eadie put on his slicker.

"Well, so we're driving," said he. "And I broke my neck to get up here in time to go with it. Figure that out! Well, I suppose if I'd got here too late for it I'd have been just as mad."

"Wait till you see the place we're drivin' at," said one of the machine gunners. "I wouldn't give a Dijon franc for our chances o' goin' ten yards."

"Have you been up on the front?" asked the sergeant in surprise.

"Up on the front?" cried all. "Damn right we been up. Every night for the last coupla weeks."

"We been buryin' ammunition," explained Ham. "We go up and bury shells where the battery is going to be. Fifty rounds here, fifty rounds somewhere else. Every one in the outfit went up and worked like hell."

"Have we got a good place for the guns?" asked Eadie.

Again every one tried to answer at once. "I'll say it's good," they cried. "It's out in No Man's Land about fifty yards in front o' the trenches."

"And there's a great big hill there," said Ham, "the biggest hill I ever see and on top of it's the boche. Boy, they can lean out of their observatories and spit on the gunners."

"Kid us along!" scoffed Eadie.

"All right," said the gunners. "Wait till it gets daylight an' see."

Darkness fell and the rain increased. Eadie remembered that his gas mask had not had its eye-pieces greased and that the rain would blur his vision when he put it on. His pistol would be still gummy with cosmoline. The barrel was not even clear. After the fatigue of the previous day the night march was doubly exhausting, even though he could rest by sitting on the steps of the fourgon during the frequent halts. Try as he could, he could not shake off a deep depression, which, as the night and the march progressed, began to develop into downright fear.

"What's the matter, sergeant?" asked Ham, sitting down beside Eadie during one of the halts. "You don't seem to have much to say."

"I tell you, Ham, I'm scared," said Eadie. "I've been running around France for the last ten days or so and

I'm all tired out. And then to be wet and cold. This rain gets my goat. They say that a man's first battle is the worst, and after that he doesn't mind. What a damn lie! This isn't my first scrap by a long shot, but I'm twice as scared as I ever was on the Marne."

"So'm I," said Ham. "Wait till you see the front, though, and what we've got to drive against, an' if you don't put in for a new suit of underwear, I'll eat my tin hat. Man, my teeth rattle every time I think of it."

"Is it colder than hell here, or is it my imagination?" asked Eadie, shivering violently.

"Yeh, it's cold," said Ham. "There's swamps around here makes it that way. Damp comes out of 'em."

Before Eadie's eyes the dim shapes of the gunners moved back and forth in the darkness. A horse stamped, rattling his trace chains and his driver cursed softly. From the head of the column came a wailing cry, "Forwar-r-rd, hooooooo!"

"Gup!" said the drivers, whips slapped, horses stamped, the carriages creaked, and the march began again. The column continued its way through the dripping woods, and the rain fell harder and harder. The men behind the fourgon held little conversation. They were all machine gunners, with the exception of Eadie. Machine gunners with a field battery led a hard life. In this outfit they were a sort of general fatigue detail. If there was a dugout to be dug, a garbage pit to be filled in, a road to be cut through brush, ammunition to be carried or wood to be cut, the machine gunners did it. There were two machine guns with each battery for aircraft defense, and one man was left with the guns to shoot at raiding airplanes, while the rest bore down heavily on picks and shovels. The machine gunners now meditated on what their particular job would be during the coming

attack. One thing they were sure of, that the job would be unpleasant. Eadie, on his part, was too tired to talk. Only once did he speak, after the first time.

"Ham," said he, "did you see Darcy anywhere? Do you suppose they brought him up, or left him?"

"They probably left him to come along to-morrow with the men's packs and the rest of the wheeled transport. He was wounded, you know, and just back from hospital."

"Wounded?" cried Eadie, "what difference would that make? So was I!"

"Aw, you know what I mean, he was really hit," said Ham. "Anyways, they need you to observe or parley French for 'em or somethin'."

Eadie responded with a grunt. They marched in silence for some time, and then passed through a ruined town, where chinks of light showed in the cellars. Out of this town they turned, across a wide plain, along a road where the shell holes every few yards began to impede the march of the carriages. Far off in the distance gleamed a row of lights, like those of a distant boulevard. These lights flickered and changed position constantly, but there was always a long line of them in air.

"Is this us?" asked Eadie.

"This is us," replied Ham. "Them lights is the German lines."

"How much farther do we go?" asked Eadie.

"Oh, quite a ways," said one of the machine gunners. "Yup, quite a drag yet. I been over this damn road so many times I know every shell hole in it."

"Scared, sergeant?" asked another man.

"Damn right, I'm scared, aren't you?"

"No, I ain't scared really, but my kidneys gets to workin' overtime the minute we leave them last houses."

"Ham," muttered Eadie, "what do you suppose would happen if the boche happened to spot this column? Suppose one of those lights drifted this way."

"There'd be as nice a mess of horse an' man hash as ever you see," replied Ham. One of the machine gunners coughed nervously and after that there was silence, lest the boche hear them talking across two thousand yards of country.

In a short time Eadie could tell by the action of the column, a long halt, a forward movement, an advance of a few yards, halt again, advance a few yards more, halt again, that the end of the march had been reached and that one by one the guns were being turned off the road, flogged over the ditch and taken to their positions in the field.

"Is Sergeant Eadie behind that fourgon?" called a voice from the darkness, that Eadie recognized as the captain's.

"Here, sir!" answered Eadie. He turned in the direction of the voice and found it came from what looked like a high bank along the road.

"Careful," said the captain, "there's a trench along the road. There's another one here. Feel around with your foot and you feel the bridge into it. Here, give me your hand."

The sergeant groped about until he found the other's hand and then managed to get across what felt like a plank leading from the road to the high bank. Once across the plank he could feel the slippery stickiness of a trench floor.

"Come on," said the captain. Eadie followed the sound of slickers brushing the trench wall. He heard water splashing and before he realized it he was knee-deep in icy water himself. The sound of splashing ahead ceased and then another mysterious voice spoke from the blackness.

"This way," said the voice, "mind the step, it's quite high." In spite of this warning, Eadie stumbled and fell, bruising his shin badly. He felt boards under his hands when he landed, a match crackled, and then a candle lighted the darkness. Eadie found himself in a dugout, a burrow, a hole in the wall of the trench, so narrow that two boards laid side by side floored it. Along one side a bunk had been dug out of the wall and on this bunk sat Eadie's captain and another man, also an officer by his face, though otherwise his appearance was that of an enlisted man. A doughboy officer, Eadie knew at once. The infantry officers, knowing that every enemy sniper is hunting them as targets, do not go in very strongly for an officer-like appearance.

"This is the sergeant that's going with you," said Eadie's captain, opening his map case.

"Where's the officer?" asked the doughboy.

"Well," said Eadie's captain, "to tell you the truth I'm shy of officers. I've only got the executive and one other who's got to stay with me. He's too valuable to send cavorting off to get killed. The sergeant's going with you alone."

"But can he do the job?" asked the doughboy, looking searchingly at Eadie.

"Oh, yes," replied the captain, "he's very capable, more so than most officers and he's had considerable battle experience. Now, sergeant, listen. Have you got the sector well in mind?"

"Yes, sir," said Eadie. He hadn't, but it was no time to admit it at that moment.

"Well, this country, you know, is pretty flat, so we can't find a good O. P. Hence we have to send you along with the infantry. They're a good outfit, the Sixteenth, and you ought to have an amusing day."

"What will my duties be, sir?" asked Eadie, clearing his throat.

"Not much. We'll give you a pistol and some rockets and if the infantry want the range lengthened the captain, who is battalion commander, will tell you. Whatever he wants done, he'll tell you and you shoot the corresponding rocket. When the advance reaches its objective, you'll take the coordinates of all the good targets and the location of our troops and come back with the information. This sergeant is just back from—er—detached duty, captain, so maybe I'd better read him the order. 'Headquarters First Division (we're attached to them for the operation), A. E. F., September 9th, Field Orders 36. VERY SECRET. The first army attacks at H hour on D day, that is at five o'clock to-morrow morning, to reduce the Saint Mihiel salient by two simultaneous attacks, one from the south and one from the west. The First Division participates in the attack as the left division of the Fourth Corps.' Mmmm. 'Mission of the division'—never mind that. 'Formation of troops'—never mind that. 'Objectives.' Ah! Twenty minutes the barrage stands on the first objective and on the second too, remember that. And it will stand in front of the third objective until eleven o'clock. The fourth objective you'll have to regulate by rockets as the captain or whoever relieves him in command of the battalion directs. Mmmmmm. The rest isn't of importance. 'Artillery; the following units, etc.' Mmmmmm. 'One regiment 75mm 3d F. A. Brigade.' That's us. 'Tanks.' Mmmm. 'Gas and flame troops. Cavalry!' By God, they're going to use cavalry. Prisoner escort, probably. Well, that's enough. Any questions? No? Have you got a first aid packet?"

"Yessir!"

"Well, keep it handy. And don't take any letters or orders or maps or anything on you that might give information to the enemy in case you should—er—drop them, or anything."

"No, sir."

"That's all. Stick around outside and the captain will take you over to the jumping off place with him when he goes. Good luck."

Eadie's captain shook hands with him and the sergeant went out again into the wet trench. Outside in the trench the rain came down in sheets. Eadie had never seen such a downpour. He felt his way along the wall, looking for some place to sit down where he could get his feet out of the water. A dim shape before him resolved itself into two men standing against the wall, a blanket over their heads.

"Who's there?" asked Eadie.

"We're sentries, sir," said the men.

"I'm a sergeant from the field artillery," said Eadie, delicately letting the men know that he was not an officer. "Do you belong to the garrison of the trench? What outfit are you from? Are you out of the Sixteenth?"

"Naw," said the men, "we're shock troops. We're gettin' relieved outta here to-night to go pull off a battle somewhere."

"Ah," said Eadie, "is this a hot sector?"

"No, it ain't, it's cold as hell here, especially nights."

"I mean is it lively?"

"Well," said the men, "it is and it ain't. You can hear patrols out in the wire sometimes an' if a man walked around the parapet in the daytime he'd most like get shot at, but otherwise we don't see much action."

"They got a hill there," spoke up the other man, "an' the boche on top of it can see us come outta our dugouts.

Man, I ain't kiddin.' A guy can't write a letter to his girl without thinkin' the boche are lookin' over his shoulder an' readin' every word of it."

"Psst!" hissed one of the sentries. A man was coming splattering down the trench.

"Are you there, sergeant?" asked the newcomer. Eadie recognized the doughboy captain's voice.

"Yessir," he replied.

"Come on, then."

The sergeant followed the officer down the trench. They came out on the road and the officer turned along it in the direction that the column had taken. The going was very rough and in the intense blackness it was impossible to see the surface of the road. They had not gone more than a few steps before Eadie fell into a water-filled shell hole. He scrambled out again as best he could, and was comforted by the captain telling him not to make so much noise. There was a loud splash, scratching, scrambling, another louder splash, and a confused gurgling that cleared into the captain's voice raised in profane wrath. Eadie was glad the night was dark and he could laugh to his heart's content without fear of discovery.

"Halt!" Eadie complied instantly. There was a long silence.

"Say your piece," spoke up the captain, "and get it over with."

"You Americans?" asked the unseen sentry.

"Surest thing," replied the captain.

"Pass."

"That's the front line we just passed," said the captain. "Look out for these shell holes. They're quite thick here." He fell into one just then with all the noise and splashing of a diving horse landing in a tank. Eadie went into one himself, into icy water up to his waist.

"Listen," said the captain, "what's that noise down there?"

"I can't make out," said Eadie, after a minute of straining his ears. "It sounds like a horse pawing."

"I guess that's what it is," agreed the captain. "Some fool has tied up a horse in the road there. Let's go down to your battery here and find out if it belongs to them. The boche are liable to send out a patrol to see what that noise is. Have you got a gun?"

"Yessir," said Eadie. He wondered how useful it would be strapped to his waist under slicker and overcoat and full of cosmoline. At least it wouldn't get rusty from being plunged into water every few minutes.

The captain led Eadie off the road and across a field. The sergeant could feel grass and new ruts under his feet and knew that the guns must have passed that way. They followed the track of these ruts downhill, then abandoned them for the faint sound of digging. In this way they came to the battery, where the gunners were digging holes for the trail spades.

"That horse?" answered some one in response to the captain's inquiry. "We don't know who it belongs to. Some one tied him up out there to a tree. There's forty rounds of high-ex shells under that tree and that horse is pawin' at 'em. We don't dare untie him nor dig up the shells either, for fear one of 'em will go off."

"Will shells explode if they haven't got the fuses set?" asked the captain.

"Well, that's the question!" replied the other.

"You're liable to have a boche patrol in here," said the captain. "Who's in charge? Well, it's none of my business. Come, sergeant, my battalion is supposed to come in and spend what's left of the night directly in rear of this battery. There's a little knoll here. Let's go up and wait for them."

They climbed up the low hill again and sat down on the ground. The view was quite good from there. Eadie could see the lights from the German trenches and now and again, in a light that went up from somewhere to the right of the battery, the gleaming bones of a dead town, the wrecks of walls, a chimney or two, and piles of white rubbish made of the stones with which the town had been built. There were trees somewhere in the middle distance, their leaves dripping with rain that glittered in the white light of the flares. The captain muttered something about one o'clock. Rain seeped under Eadie's slicker, mud and water had soaked through his breeches so that he felt as if he were naked from the waist down. He became conscious suddenly of a rustling overhead, a soft whistling, like the stirring of wind through lofty trees. "Pssssssss!" went something and the sound died away in the distance, as though whatever it was that passed trailed long streamers of fluttering silk behind it. Again that long hiss that Eadie could hear for a long time until it finally died away far over the German lines. The rain drumming on his helmet hindered his hearing. He removed the helmet and then could hear better. The sound now was clearer, like the waving of thousands of flags.

"It must be the bombardment," thought Eadie. "I'm glad I'm not on the receiving end." He listened for the reports of the guns, the thunder of hundreds of cannon, but heard no sound save that gentle sighing, that swift rushing far above him, a rush that grew to a sharp hiss and then died away into a gentle sigh and then silence. He heard neither the report of the gun that fired it, nor the explosion of the shell when it struck. The lights still continued to glow above No Man's Land.

"Here's my battalion," said the captain suddenly. Men appeared all around Eadie. He could hear some one

reporting to the captain, a tale of wrong roads, companies gone astray in the darkness, and the sad news that the battalion was shy about twenty-five per cent of its effective strength.

"Where are they?" asked the captain.

"God knows," said the other man. "A platoon from this company, a squad from that, ten men from another. It wasn't the men's fault. Other outfits kept cutting into the column at crossroads. We had a hell of a time. Worse than the night before Soissons. It seems as if every time we planned a drive it rained soup and stones to splash it."

"The Germans claim they're in direct liaison with Heaven," remarked the captain. "Maybe they are. Some of us will know this time to-morrow night. Well, have the men dig in and get some sleep. At four o'clock every one up."

Shortly there was the sound of packs thumping on the ground, men's voices subdued with fatigue, and the scrape of pick and shovel on rocky soil. This died away, little by little, and all was silent once more.

"Hush! Hush!" said the shells overhead.

"You'd better get some sleep, sergeant," said the captain, "you'll need it. I'm going around to have a look at my companies. Stay here and shut your eyes a minute."

"I'd just as soon come with you," said Eadie. "It will warm me up a bit."

"Don't be a fool," said the captain. "You won't do any good running around with me. Stay here and rest. You won't get another chance for some time."

The captain swished away and Eadie, drawing up his legs to get them under the shelter of his slicker and overcoat, pillowed his head on his gas mask and put his helmet over his face. The infantry had each man dig a hole

for himself to sleep in, so that he would have protection in case of a bombardment, but Eadie was an artilleryman and so slept on top of the ground. Furthermore, he had no pick and shovel to dig a hole with if he had wanted to. He listened to the rain rattling on his helmet, he thought of his gas mask, its eye-pieces not greased, and his gun that was too much so. He thought also of this sector that he did not know. Perhaps he would have luck and get a slight wound right at the beginning of the affair. But that would mean hospital again and the prospect was not alluring.

"Come, come, sergeant!" said a voice. "Come, it's time you were up. I've let you sleep till the last minute."

Eadie pushed off his helmet and sat up. It was no longer raining and day was not far off. The eastern horizon was already quite light and overhead, right in the zenith, was a patch of blue. All about Eadie men were rising from the ground, coming out of their holes as the dead will on the Judgment Day. They arose, settled their helmets, adjusted their gas masks, and moved off into the dusk. Their voices made a murmuring like the sea on the shore. Eadie, stiff and cold, hobbled after the captain, past group after group of soldiers, all going downhill in the half-darkness, and groaning with the pain of their stiffened limbs.

It was daylight by the time they had waded through a creek and come to a road. Evidently this was to be the jump-off. The captain halted and looked about him. Eadie thought the moment propitious for a look on his own part, to see if there were any outstanding features of the sector that might serve as guides later on. Behind there was nothing but rolling fields gray under the dawn and afar off a road with trees that crossed the horizon. There were nice deep dugouts along that road, thought Eadie enviously. He turned and looked the other way.

One look was enough. Out of a level plain leaped a mountain. It towered out of sight amongst the clouds. No need for any guide posts in that sector. Wherever Eadie might find himself he could see that mountain and know that his battery was at the foot of it. That is, the battery *had been* at the foot of it.

Eadie remembered a battery he had seen on the Marne, a German battery, that had been shoved forward as Eadie's had been to cover an advance. The range of a field gun is about four miles and if the infantry is at all aggressive in a drive, they are liable to run out of range and the guns must cease firing while they are moved up within range again. This consequent cessation of artillery support is liable to give the enemy a chance to rally and prevent the further advance of the infantry. Hence the light guns are placed as far forward as they can be. This German battery on the Marne, then, was very close to the bank of the river, in plain sight of all the observation posts on the opposite bank. The life of that battery had been short. Eadie had counted twenty-four bodies under the guns and the fragments of several more dangling from the trees overhead. He remembered that there were trees near his battery, too.

About Eadie the men discussed the mountain. The outfit would never pass it. The outfit would take it by frontal attack. There was a strong belief that it was to be blown up by a mine, in fact, certain soldiers claimed to have talked with men in Toul who had sunk said mine. All agreed that something would be done, for to think of starting a drive with that cliff held by the enemy would be madness.

"Have you got a Very pistol?" asked the captain suddenly. He turned to Eadie from the group of officers kneeling about a map.

"No, sir," said Eadie, in a feeling of panic. A Very pistol was for firing rockets.

"Good," said the captain. "I was going to take it away from you if you had. I've found that as long as you leave the artillery shooting their fool barrage in their own fool way, you'll be all right, but if you once start spreading panels or shooting rockets to try to get them to increase their range or shift their target, you'll get a damn fine shower of steel right in the back of the neck. You stick right with me, sergeant, and leave the artillery alone. And get yourself a rifle, too, from the first casualty. We're going with the first wave and you don't want to monkey around in German trenches with nothing but a pistol. Good! Posts, gentlemen!"

The officers trotted away and the little group of enlisted men, a sergeant-major, two runners and a signal corps sergeant, began to tighten their lips and settle and resettle their gas masks. Eadie's heart beat so fast that he could hardly breathe. Again he looked around, but could not see more than ten or fifteen men at the most. Not many to start a drive with. It was rapidly growing lighter. Eadie's teeth rattled so that he was in danger of biting off his tongue and he kept working his fingers to free them of the mud that crusted them. He wished they would start. And his pistol, its barrel full of grease, still in its holster around his waist, under slicker and overcoat! Ah, if the man who invented cosmoline were only there now! Well, what were they waiting for?

Berrrup-blam!

"There go my guns!" cried Eadie excitedly. The captain stood up and spoke quietly to the little staff.

"It's time we were going," said he.

From all up and down the fields soldiers rose up as they must have behind the man that sowed the dragon's teeth. The country crawled with them. Every blade of

grass seemed to have turned into a soldier. And the rising sun upon those bayonets! Eadie's feet, feeling like those of another man, moved under him, carried him across the road and into a torn field on the other side. A cold, bitter wind blew in his face. How light it was! What a mob of men! Machine gunners, gun on shoulder, auto rifle men, and stretcher bearers. Well, the mountain would begin to speak in a second or two. Eadie looked at it again. The white cloud upon its summit was thicker now and lightnings flew out of it. Eadie gasped, gritted his teeth, and looked again. Another thing he had forgotten was field glasses.

"That's a smoke screen," said he, "or I'm no artilleryman. So much for the mountain." He looked to the front again. Their objective was clearly marked now, a towering wall of the same kind of smoke as that which covered the mountain. Rockets shot despairingly from this wall, flares that tried to light its opaqueness, and red rockets that called on unheeding artillery for help. It was time for a counter barrage, thought Eadie, but none came. It was time for machine guns to begin to pound, but he heard none. Nothing but the steady tramping of feet, faint cries of command, and a far-off clatter. Eadie had never fought with tanks and so did not recognize the sound. He was all the more surprised when one rushed suddenly out of a tiny valley and wheezed and clattered on ahead. After it lurched another, that seemed to be mate to the first. This could not last. The Germans would begin firing in another second.

Ah! There was the first shell. Eadie resisted an impulse to duck, for he knew very well the shell would not land anywhere near him. Now then, the deluge would follow. There was a long, nerve-racking silence, during which Eadie heard a man call out that he had been hit.

Blump! A second shell exploded a little way behind them, among the men in the next wave.

"What the hell is the matter with them boche?" muttered the sergeant-major. "Why don't they start shootin'?"

"They will in a second," said Eadie through his thumping teeth. "Give 'em time. Here's their wire."

The men began to go through the shattered wire, stepping high and wide to escape the few straggling strands that were left. The wire, the posts, and the ground that had supported the posts had all been churned together by the barrage and then rolled flat by the tanks. They were near the trench now and Eadie began to feel little waves of fear. He had no weapon and if a bayonet fight started he would be in a sad case. He could hear machine guns going now, shouts, and the sharp explosions of grenades. The German trench suddenly yawned under his feet as though the ground had opened. It was just a ditch of newly excavated earth, the dirt pulverized and scattered about. On either side the smoke hid the attacking force and the farther sections of the trench, but in the small space before Eadie he could see shattered bits of corrugated iron, half hidden under piles of fresh earth, a broken chair, a great amount of débris, overcoats, shirts, a knapsack, an old boot, and a section of parapet still intact, with three rifles leaning against it. The attackers flowed into the trench and out the other side. There were no dugouts visible.

"This ain't much of a fight!" exclaimed one of the runners. From the smoke came other remarks.

"Come outta that, now! Put down that rifle or I'll blow hell outta yuh!"

"Take 'em to the rear, private."

"Hey, wait a minute, I want that bird's belt!"

"Here's the fight," thought Eadie.

Men were shouting everywhere, grenades slamming, a faint purr of machine guns. A pistol cracked so near that it hurt Eadie's eardrum. The captain had fired at two Germans who appeared with bayoneted rifles. Rifles cracked all around him like popping corn and the Germans went down in a heap.

The smoke became thinner and the advance suddenly came out upon a road, a hard well-kept road. Before them stretched green fields under a blue sky. A tank wallowed in the middle distance, its gun spouting flame, and just beyond rolled the smoke of the American barrage. It occurred to Eadie that he had not yet seen an American drop. Grenades exploded from time to time, a machine gun would fire one burst and then subside, and an occasional shell screeched and then exploded with a clatter.

The captain halted and looked about him with his field glasses. Then he consulted his compass. On the right one company appeared to be having difficulty before a patch of woods and a runner went scurrying to direct another company to give aid. Behind them the smoke screen above the first line trenches hid everything. From this screen a steady stream of troops appeared. They were having casualties, for Eadie could see stretcher bearers working, but the hostile fire was not heavy.

"This isn't my idea of a fight," said the sergeant-major. "Them boche are wise ones. I think there's some trick here. We'll probably get ours going across this field."

The captain put away his compass and went forward again, walking calmly down the road. He might have been on a maneuver somewhere for all the concern he showed.

"We aren't through the defense system that quick, are we?" asked Eadie.

"I don't see any more trenches," said the sergeant-

major. "There's a shack for sentries." He pointed to a shelter built alongside the road, probably a sentry or police post. "More than that I don't see a damn thing. My guess is that Jerry pulled out in the night."

"Maybe you're right," said Eadie cheerfully. "It looks like it. We haven't taken any prisoners."

"Hot dog!" cried one of the runners. "Hear that, Chick?" He slapped his companion on the back. "Luck! No fightin' an' we won't have to clean our rifles!"

The advance crossed the field and, following the road, they came to a crossroads where a sign directed them one way toward Mount Sec. The other way had no marker, but went off aimlessly across the fields.

"Here's a halt," said Eadie.

"Runners!" called the captain. The two runners went up and were sent off with messages, one to the colonel and one to the major of the right battalion. Others came in. It seemed that the halt was going to be prolonged, to give the artillery time to clean out the woods in front. American machine guns began to fire a barrage over the heads of the infantry.

"The game goeth right well," remarked the captain, lighting a cigar. "We're a mile and a half from the jump-off and going strong. Here, lieutenant, have a cigar." He passed one to the other officer, evidently his adjutant.

"If anything ever started off more unpropitiously than this affair, I don't know of it," resumed the captain. "This battalion was turned over to me at four o'clock yesterday afternoon. Major Cook had appendicitis. Well, you can imagine my feelings. I went over to the artillery to see about a little liaison and they told me vaguely to get an officer and a liaison detail from one of their batteries. And said battery hands me a sergeant and says that's all I can have. Come here, sergeant, I'm

going to give you a chance to earn your day's pay. Go back to your battery and tell them that this drive is a picnic. Tell 'em to cease firing. By the time you get back we'll be out of range. Tell 'em they can go back to their own division, I don't need 'em any more." The captain removed his helmet. "Is my hair white?" he demanded. "I could feel it turning when we started out." The adjutant assured him that it was still its normal color. "Go on, sergeant," said the captain, "get going. Tell your battery commander he did a nice barrage for us."

Eadie saluted and turned to retrace his steps along the road. The advance had halted everywhere, while the tanks and artillery beat the woods, but they started forward again, coming out of the ditch, from hollows in the ground, from behind bushes. There were machine gunners in great numbers, and men with queer looking weapons that Eadie recognized as Stokes mortars. From time to time he passed walking wounded, men with slight wounds, working their way back to where they could find a truck to give them a lift, for ambulances were reserved for serious cases. The sun shone warmly and Eadie removed overcoat and slicker to let the heat get at his wet uniform. What a fool he had been to be frightened! But then things always look differently in warm sunlight than they do in a black night under a bucketing rain, in the glare of the corpse-lights shooting up from the enemy lines.

"This is about as dangerous as Fourth of July," said Eadie aloud, "and not half so interesting. I wonder what the chances are on breakfast?" He continued his way blithely back to the battery.

The guns he found easily on the banks of a creek behind a ruined town. He remembered that there had been trees in front of them and since there was but one clump

of trees in that section of the plain, the task of locating the battery was not difficult. The men sat about the guns sunning themselves, while one piece, manned by a bored crew, still fired. The gunner of this piece got up from the ground after every shot and took a peek at the aiming point through the window in the shield. Finding all in order he sat down again to his former occupation, that of eating canned hash with a spoon. The Number One, who sat on his tiny seat on the right of the gun, had his back to the shield, and smoked a cigarette. He fired the piece without turning around, snapped open the breech block and when Number Two had shoved in the fresh shell, closed the breech by shoving down with his elbow on the lever.

"Hi, sergeant," called the gunners, "how was the barrage?" They knew that Eadie's duty was watching the arrival of the battery's shells at their destination, though they did not know that he had accompanied the infantry. "How's the battle goin'?" called others.

"There's no battle," replied Eadie, "this is target practice. The boche are half way to Berlin by now."

The first sergeant of the battery came stalking his way across the field. A first sergeant's place is not usually with the firing battery, but this one felt—and the officers agreed—that he could do more good where the action was than by seeing that the horses at the echelon were groomed twice a day. He had had an injury to his leg in the old army and this gave him a stalking gait.

"What's going on up there, sergeant?" he called.

"Not much. We ran ourselves out of wind chasing them. The jawbone major sent me back with a message."

"Have much of a fight?" asked the first sergeant.

"No," replied Eadie, "none at all. I don't think I saw more than three casualties."

"You didn't get shell shock this time then? Run along

to the captain so he'll know you didn't go over the hill."

"What do you mean, over the hill?" cried Eadie.

"Never mind, never mind," grinned the first sergeant. "I didn't come in the army yesterday, my laddie buck. I know all the tricks. On your way, the skipper's lookin' for you."

"Don't let him kid you, sergeant," said a section chief. The men all grinned at Eadie. Good feeling was rife in that battery, for the worst of the scrap was over and the meanest tempered man feels a kindly feeling toward all when the shadow of death has hovered over him a few hours and then been removed.

At the post of command Eadie was told that the captain had gone to the battalion for officers' call. The order had come by telephone some time before to cease firing, with the exception of one gun that was to shell a patch of woods on the left, where no advance had been made and where the French troops who held that section of the line reported strong machine gun concentrations. The part of the battle order that directed the battery to move forward at eleven o'clock had been countermanded.

"Where's Ham and the machine gunners?" asked Eadie.

"Over in the field, goldbricking."

Eadie directed his course thither. Mount Sec loomed quiet and peaceful now, its summit bearing no visible scars of the bombardment to which it had been subjected. The sun shone warmly upon it. It did not look half so high, nor half so grim and menacing as it had in the faint light of dawn.

Across the road the machine guns had been set up, their muzzles pointing skyward, ready to cordially receive any prowling German plane that came their way.

"Hey, Ham," called Eadie, "how's the battle?"

The machine gunners received him uproariously. They

had broken open a case of emergency rations the garrison of the trench had left behind and were regaling themselves about a small fire, heating the beans in a messkit and eating handfuls of sugar.

"Sit down," said Ham, "look at the sack of sugar we buscared. Man, it tastes like candy. An' Dopey Dave here had brains enough to bring his messkit along so we had something to heat the beans in. This is kind of a late breakfast. Tell us, I hear the boche lit out for Berlin. Is that so?"

"I'll say it is," agreed Eadie. He spread his slicker and overcoat in the sun to dry out, untied his gas mask and let it hang in the carrying position and began to unwrap his puttees. He happened to catch Ham's eye and a slight jerk of the head brought the machine gun sergeant to Eadie's side.

"Ham," said Eadie, removing his wet shoes and stockings, "I want the low down, now. Give it to me straight. What does this outfit think I pulled off up on the Marne?"

"Aw, nuthin'," said Ham, "they're just kiddin' yuh. We all know you got hit or shell shocked or somethin'. Only that looey you went out with that afternoon, he come back and said you went over the hill. Well, you didn't show up again and then the next thing we heard was you was in hospital."

"Over the hill! The son of a gun! Why, the Old Man sent me out to find a bridge and the looey was the one that beat it without finding any bridge. He jumped on his horse and went blooey. I was on my way back when I got hit. Well, now, I didn't really get struck by a piece of shell, but that shell knocked me cold and I got a damned good dose of gas and I was a sick son of a gun for a month or more. I suffered, Ham, no kiddin'. And now every one makes a wise crack about a jawbone wound stripe. And this nit-wit officer we got with the echelon 'old me to take it off."

"Aw, don't mind him," said Ham. "Why, he don't rate spit high in this outfit. No one pays him any more attention than they would the barkin' of a dog. He went monkeying round the picket line and Daddy Cullen that's stable sergeant now told him to get the hell away from the horses or he'd kick his backbone right up through his skull. And Daddy never got a thing out of it. The Old Man told Connor not to sling no swill to the stable sergeant."

"All the same," said Eadie, "after all I went through and being sick and everything, it's a little rough to go back to the outfit and get razzed for wearing a wound stripe."

"Well, as long as you're the only man in the outfit that's got one, you got to expect they'll be jealous and put you on the pan now an' then. Me, I'd tell 'em all to take a flyin' fling at the moon. Come on, give us your cup, we got some coffee here. It'll make a new man out of you."

Eadie ate the rest of his dinner, warming his naked feet by the fire. He could see the entrance to the trench where the Post of Command was, so he would know the minute the captain came back. Meanwhile he had nothing to do but enjoy himself and wait for his clothes to dry. The sun was warm on his back, the fire warm on his feet, and the beans and coffee warmed his interior. Sherman put it a little too strong after all, thought Eadie.

Prisoners had been coming along the road from the front in ever increasing numbers and when the head of a column of about five hundred appeared down the road, the machine gun crew and Eadie adjourned to the edge of the road to watch them pass. They were a husky enough looking lot, many of them smooth-shaven, others with long mustaches, and as Ham pointed out, not a gray beard in the lot. They advanced a good lively pace, led by a solitary M. P.

"Aren't you afraid they'll bite you?" asked Eadie as the M. P. went by him.

The M. P. looked darkly up at the sergeant on the bank above him. "Boy," said he, "if I was to yell right loud at them they'd ruin their clothes."

"All the same," said Ham to the sergeant, "it's kinda dangerous to have one guy guardin' all that bunch."

"I ain't guardin' 'em," called back the M. P., who had heard, "I'm showin' 'em the road!"

Rank after rank of Germans passed, overcoats and blankets over their arms, many of them with their personal effects done up in neat bundles, a sign that they had foreseen their capture some time before it happened, and had made provision for their future comfort while in the hands of the enemy. A heavy machine gun crew passed, their weapon carried by different members of the crew, one with the tripod, three others with the gun on their shoulders. These men were guarded by two French soldiers with bayoneted rifles. Another long column went by and as Eadie watched it out of sight, he saw the captain approaching down the road.

"Ah," said Eadie, "farewell leisure. Here comes the Old Man." He hobbled back to the fire and put on his shoes and stockings. They were still damp, but he was used to drying wet shoes on his feet.

"Hang your eye on my slicker and overcoat awhile, will you, Ham?" asked Eadie, wrapping his puttees about his legs. "I'll go report and then I'll come back."

The captain's eagle eye had lighted on Eadie, however, and he beckoned to the sergeant, instead of going into the trench.

"How did it go?" asked the captain, when Eadie stood before him. "Good? I hope it keeps on this way. The indications are that it will. Well, now, I'm going to give you a job. The battery is to move forward within an

hour. Our transport, kitchen and all that, won't leave camp until to-night. And we'll be gone when they get here. So then, you come up with us and when we find out where the battery will take up position, you come back and guide our transport to the new position. It will be a nice job," concluded the captain, "because you'll be out of range most of the night. Of course, if a counter attack starts, you'll hold the transport here."

"Does the captain know where young Darcy is?" asked Eadie.

"Why, yes. He stays with the echelon. I don't think he's quite strong enough yet for front line service."

Eadie saluted and went back across the road where he reported to Ham. "Ah, hell," commented Ham, "an' the minute we get into the new position, machine gunners up to dig an officers' dugout!"

"You've got no growl," said Eadie. "Look at me. 'Darcy,' says the Old Man, 'isn't strong enough yet for front line service.' Whereas me, also just out of hospital, having spent one night waiting for the attack, I can spend another night without sleep waiting for the kitchen and fourgons to come up and then guide 'em to the new position. Where the hell does the captain think I was the last six weeks? Well, I wasn't taking a rest cure, I'll tell him that."

"Don't get riled," said Ham. "Darcy, yuh see, they had to whittle on him because he had that piece of iron in his back an' he lost blood an' all that. An' then, like I said, good instrument sergeants are hard to find."

"Ham," said Eadie, "for those kind words I get you drunk next pay-day."

A few minutes later the machine gunners could see a runner arrive at the battery, the lone piece ceased firing, and preparations were at once made for an advance. The limbers came up from some place in rear where they had

been in shelter and the guns were wheeled out of their positions. The machine gunners began to dismount their guns.

Eadie again surveyed the sector from the little knoll. Where that morning had been a rolling plain, lonely and deserted, the countryside teemed with life like an ant-hill. The fields were dotted with deserted tanks, disabled or abandoned during the morning's advance, and the roads that had seen no wheel for four years, crawled with trucks. Many of the trucks in sight did not crawl, but rested sadly at a sharp angle, mired to the hubs. To the east a field hospital was being set up, its tents being laboriously raised one by one. Pioneer infantry and engineers tramped by, going up to repair roads and bridge trenches, and the steady flow of German prisoners to the rear grew thicker and thicker.

"What a fool I was," muttered Eadie. "Well, I'm never going to be scared again. This may be the last drive of the war. For all I know the German army has collapsed. I'll say the German army has deteriorated since Château Thierry. Well, whether it has or not, I'll never be scared of it again." He could feel his cheeks get hot as he thought of the stark terror that had come over him in the few minutes just before the attack that morning. "Nope," he said aloud, "never again."

He rolled himself a cigarette with damp tobacco and, lighting it from a briquet after some difficulty, followed the machine gunners downhill to the battery. His gas mask, that had caused him so much worry, he had not drawn from its carrier once, he had had no use for his pistol, and he had not once been asked to locate so much as a single road, so that his ignorance of the sector had not bothered him the slightest. Victory, complete and absolute, that was what it was, and the war might be over to-morrow.

Chapter III

TO THE SALVAGE TROOPS BELONG THE SPOILS

A WHITE road, its surface untouched by shells, went slowly uphill from Nonsard to Pannes. This road had once been well within the German lines, but it was now just as far behind the American positions. The attack, three days ago, had flattened the salient completely. Along this road an occasional motorcyclist raised a long cloud of dust and parties of engineers went by, pick and shovel on shoulder. Other traffic there was none; the countryside lay quiet and peaceful under the hot sun of mid-afternoon. It was a day that made a man think of a swimming hole, of bees murmuring, and listen for the rattle of a mowing machine in the next field. There was no suggestion of recent conflict except the new shell holes a yard or so wide and almost as deep all along the upper edge of the road, where the American artillery, two nights before, had closed the road to traffic without injuring its surface.

At the western end of the road, where it emerged from the orchard on the edge of the village of Nonsard, a vehicle appeared. It was of a type that fitted exactly with the rest of the scene, a four-wheeled carriage drawn by two horses, which moved slowly along, waving their tails and tossing their heads from time to time to drive away the flies. The horses were not driven from the seat of this vehicle, but by a man who rode the nigh horse. This man's feet hung from the stirrups, his helmet was on the back of his head, a faint thread of smoke came from a

drooping cigarette, and from time to time he cried, "Gup!" and struck the off horse with a whip. The off horse paid no attention.

This vehicle was an American caisson with its limber. It was really American and not French. The American army, eighteen months after the declaration of war, was beginning to equip its batteries with caissons. As for guns, it must still depend for those upon the French. There were seats for three men on both the caisson and limber, but only those of the caisson were occupied. Upon these seats sat Sergeant Eadie and two spare gunners, men who had but recently joined the battery.

"Have we got far to go now, sergeant?" asked one of the men.

"I don't know," answered Eadie. "All I've got for direction are the names of the towns we pass through. I don't know how far they are apart."

"Man, I'll be glad to get back to the battery," remarked the third man.

"Huh!" grunted Eadie, "I never had less inclination to see that battery. I know what hell they must have been through the last day or two and they aren't through with it yet."

"How come?" cried the other two men. "Why, you just told us a little while ago that they'd been took out the line and was in reserve somewhere."

"There are lots of different kinds of hell in this man's army," said Eadie. "I'm in for a taste of it myself. I was detailed to guide the transport the night after the drive and now I'm showing up two days afterwards with the rolling kitchen and a caisson."

"It ain't your fault," comforted one of the men.

"Ah," replied Eadie, "when you've been in the army as long as I have, you'll know that that's no alibi. The Old Man will want some one's blood and the chances are

that it will be mine. Oh, man! And I went absent from hospital for this!"

The sergeant brought forth the materials for a cigarette and tried to manufacture one, but the caisson bumped so and so much tobacco was lost that he crumpled the paper savagely and threw it to the road with a curse. The caisson bumped along, dust rose heavily, and the driver apathetically beat the horses.

The caisson took an hour to go the three miles from Nonsard to Pannes. In Pannes things were livelier—infantry were billeted in the town, all kinds of headquarters were springing up, infantry, engineers, salvage organizations, signal corps, heavy artillery, military police. The streets were jammed with side cars and limousines belonging to the higher staff officers, and long lines of artillery horses were watering in the little river that runs through the town. The congestion was the same at Essey, the next town to the south, and Eadie began to realize that he was on a main artery of traffic. He consulted his itinerary. The battery was in a wood three kilometers north of Flirey, still further down the road. A German sign at the exit of Essey bore the inscription "Gefährlich. Verkehr bei tage im graben gehen," which means, in essentials, that the road is under observation by the enemy. Eadie had kept his eye on the sun, as every man in strange country should, and seeing that the road they were on led south, he decided that they must just be nearing the old front line again. The battery would hardly have been withdrawn so far unless they were going to be relieved and taken out to rest billets. If this was so, life might still be worth the living. The caisson continued to crawl up the hill and as the sun began to disappear behind the heights of the Meuse, the carriage and its riders approached a large wood.

"Hey, Eadie!" cried some one suddenly, "here he is,

here's Eadie! Good kid!" A crowd of ten or twelve men flowed from the ditch to the road, clamoring about the caisson.

"Where's the outfit?" asked Eadie. "Shut up trying to all talk at once. Where's the outfit?"

"In here," cried the men, "see the smoke from the kitchen? Chow, sergeant! Oh, man, hot grub. There's the road, beyond that next tree."

More men began to run from the woods, calling the glad news back to others that Eadie had returned. The sergeant, however, leaped down from the caisson and demanded the whereabouts of the battery commander. No one answered him; the men continued to pour from the woods, leaping and shouting. An explorer returning to his home town from the discovery of the north pole would not have had a more enthusiastic welcome than had Eadie. The sergeant paid no heed, but walked grimly along looking for signs of the Post of Command.

The road rounded a corner of the wood and Eadie passed the kitchen, where smoke poured from the chimney and steam from the marmites. The K. P.'s were stoking enthusiastically and the cook was standing on the wheel, tasting something with a long spoon. Eadie, acting in his capacity as guide to the battery baggage train, had found that kitchen on the road to Mount Sec the day before and had led it personally four kilometers across country to the right road. The cook waved him a cheery welcome. At that moment appeared also the captain and first sergeant, and the men that followed Eadie halted and stood at a little distance, to hear if possible the sergeant's report and to question him when he had done with the captain.

Eadie came to a stop before the captain and saluted. There was a deep silence, during which the mess sergeant could be heard freely cursing a K. P. "Sir," said Eadie.

"I received the order to return to the battery this morning." He paused, as if to find words.

"Yes?" said the captain. "Well, where is my wheeled transport?"

Eadie made no reply, but waved his hand toward the right. The captain and the first sergeant looked in that direction. There was an American caisson and its limber there, its new camouflage glaring even under the dust that covered it. The two high-withered, ewe-necked, bean-faced nags that were harnessed to it had already dropped their ugly heads and seemed ready to fall to the ground. The driver, shoving his helmet into a more military position on his head, was regarding Eadie and the captain anxiously, not knowing whether he should go to the picket line or wait for the captain's permission.

"Is that all?" asked the captain.

"That's all, sir."

"Good God!" ejaculated the captain. His mouth tightened and his cold blue eye swept about the men who had clustered around. These last at once fell back beyond earshot. The Old Man had an eloquent eye.

"Now, then, sergeant," invited the captain. His mouth was set in a thin line like a gash, his eyes were cold and hard, and the muscles of his jaws so tense that his face seemed carved from wood.

"Sir," began Eadie, "after I left the battery I went right back to Xivray. I sat by the road all night long and not a thing went by but trucks and ambulances. About daybreak ammunition and ration carts from the First Division began to pass. I asked them if they'd seen anything of an artillery echelon on the march. Well, with the whole American army on the march they had seen considerable artillery. Finally one driver told me he had seen the echelon of the Third Brigade, and that it was going east on the Rambucourt-Flirey road. About that

time I had sense enough to hunt up a French officer and borrow his map and it was easy to see that the echelon could have gone up the road, turned off and gone to Richecourt through Seicheprey and across country to Nonsard from there. So I hiked over to Seicheprey. I went up and down those roads, and clear out to the German support trenches, and sure enough I struck B battery's slat wagon." Eadie paused and seemed to be at a loss how to continue.

"Well, what did they say?" inquired the captain coldly.

"The first sergeant of B battery was with them," said Eadie, "and he told me that A battery's transport wasn't ready at the hour set and the column had moved out without them."

"Ah," said the captain, "and what then?"

"Well, I knew what had happened," said Eadie. "The echelon was late getting away and whoever was in charge, having no column to follow, would have to find his own way as best he could, so I went back for the map again to see where the echelon might have gone to. It was about ten o'clock in the morning then and I was pretty tired, so I borrowed a horse from a man."

There was another slight pause and an interchange of glances by all three men, but borrowing is really the word, and not stealing, for since all property belongs to the army and not to the individual, one soldier has—or should have—as much right to it as another.

"Well, I borrowed the horse and hunted for another man with a map and finally found an ambulance driver with one. All is made plain with a map. They ought to have more of 'em. There was only one place the echelon could get off the road and that was at Broussey. And that was just where they would, because the road they should take is just a cart path. If they stayed on the main road they could get to Xivray just the same, but

they would have missed me, because I wasn't watching the road from that direction, but the one from Rambucourt. So I jumped on the horse and started for Nonsard to see if they'd already arrived. They might have met some one that told 'em where the battery was. This was noon yesterday. At two o'clock I found the rolling kitchen, drawn up off the road, putting out coffee to any one who wanted it. They'd gone clear to Apremont and then turned off to Mount Sec. The mess sergeant said they'd got separated in the dark from the rest of the column and had been wandering ever since. I led 'em up to where they could see the church tower in Nonsard and told 'em to go to it. Then I went back. The fourgon I found out in the fields, with a broken wheel. And empty. I hunted until dark and found the three gun teams that I sent up this morning and then I quit and went to sleep. I found a chain and chained my horse to a tank with it—the place is lousy with abandoned tanks —and when I woke up the chain was still there. Whoever got that horse is a genius. Then the officer that was out rounding up stragglers gave me the captain's message to rejoin. This caisson I found outside Nonsard, near the boche narrow gauge railway. The lead and swing teams had gone off to water the afternoon before and hadn't come back."

"Yes," said the captain, "I see. Very well. The kitchen was really the most important carriage. You didn't see any sign of the men's packs?"

"No, sir," said Eadie.

"Well, that's all, sergeant," said the captain. "Be ready to march at seven-thirty. We're starting on a thirty-kilometer hike." The captain and the first sergeant took their departure, and the men immediately gathered about Eadie.

These soldiers, thought Eadie, had the appearance of

men who had recently undergone terrific strain. Their faces were dirty and unshaven, their eyes haggard and bloodshot. At this moment Ham, the machine gun sergeant, shoved through the crowd.

"What's the bad news?" cried several. "Spill it, sergeant. Is it straight we lost all our stuff?"

"What's all the groan, Ham?" asked Eadie. "What's hit this outfit? We've lost a fourgon and some horses and you'd think the world had come to an end."

"Lost a fourgon?" cried Ham. "I'll say we have. Where the hell is our blankets? We been freezin' to death for the last two nights. No kiddin', is all our stuff gone?"

"This is all I know," said Eadie, and to the accompaniment of groans from his hearers, he repeated the substance of his report to the captain.

"Do you know what was in that fourgon you saw?" demanded Ham, when Eadie had finished. "Well, all our packs, with our razors an' everything we own."

"Haven't the drivers of it showed up?" asked Eadie.

"They have like hell. How would they know where to go?"

The men, muttering and exclaiming, began to wander aimlessly away. The nights in northern France are cold at any season of the year and exceedingly so in September, so that sleeping on the ground without blankets is unpleasant indeed.

"Explain all this, will you, Ham?" cried Eadie. "My head has been going around like a top for the last hour. Who won this fight, us or the boche?"

"Come over to the kitchen," said Ham. "We damn near lynched the mess sergeant twice yesterday because he didn't have any chow. He got a ration issue at noon to-day and the two cooks got up a swell slum for us, with bread and oleo and onions an' all the stuff. I'm

for hangin' the mess sergeant. He was in charge of the column. Son of a bitch. Why, we haven't had nothin' to eat but goldfish and hardtack since the drive started. And sour jerry bread we found in a ration dump in Nonsard."

"Well, you'll get a good meal to-night," said Eadie comfortingly. Ham, however, was not comforted, but swore terribly.

"That's the hell of it," roared Ham. "We haven't no messkits to eat it with. They was all in our packs. You can't eat slum with your fingers."

The mess sergeant, enthroned on the seat of the kitchen limber, with a cleaver ready to hand, stood up as the two sergeants approached. There were quite a number of men milling about the kitchen, sniffing the pleasant odor from the marmites and watching the cook sample things and the K. P. slicing bread.

"I've a mind to pull you off that seat and poke the livin' tar out of you," announced Ham to the mess sergeant.

"Eadie," said the mess sergeant, standing up and rapping with his cleaver on the seat, "I can talk to you, you've got a little savvy. I told you yesterday you wouldn't find hair or hide of those other carriages, didn't I? Well, now, here's what." The mess sergeant looked around and seeing that all were listening, began a recital in what seemed to Eadie to be an overloud voice.

"The order was to be ready to march with the echelon at six. Well, six o'clock means six o'clock and because I was rankest man I was in charge. So right after dinner I started to load up the wagons. At four we were all loaded, with nothing to do but feed an' early supper, take down the picket line an' hitch in. At four-thirty comes Lieutenant Connor and says that he has figured out a table of weights, with the proper amount to go with each

wagon and what did I mean by loading up without his permission? 'Unload everything,' he says. Hear that, you jugheads? At four-thirty! At five-fifteen everything was on the ground again. At five-fifteen! Then he starts to sort out what will go in what, this for the fourgon, that for the slat wagon, something else to go on the spare caissons. 'Put each thing in its proper pile,' he says, 'according to the wagon it goes in. I figured it all out. We'll have system and no mired wagons and no broken axles.' " The mess sergeant paused and glared all around at the upturned faces below him.

"At quarter to six," said the mess sergeant, raising his voice to a shout, "the lieutenant-colonel comes around and finds all our stuff on the ground. 'Who's in charge?' he says like an iceberg. 'I am, sir,' says I—the goat always, that's me—'Damned inefficiency,' says he. 'Load up these wagons at once. If you aren't ready by six the column will move without you.' Then over comes Connor. 'What are you standing around for?' he says. 'Load up!'

" ' 'Tisn't sorted out yet, sir,' I says. 'Never mind,' he says, 'load up anywhere. This is all your dumbheaded fault. I'm going to have you broke when I get back to the battery. You aren't worth the powder to blow you to hell.' "

"Good for him," cried Ham. "That's the first sensible word that shavey has said since he came to the outfit."

"So we loaded up," continued the mess sergeant, ignoring Ham's remark, "and we put things in as they come to hand. And so we pulled out half a hour late. I told the carriages to follow the kitchen and we was to follow this lieutenant on horseback. When it come dark a truck-train cut in the column and when it turned out again, Connor was gone. I got off the seat and went to look for the fourgon. I didn't lose that fourgon till near morning.

The slat wagon and the two spare caissons was gone. The ration cart was gone. We was off the road and lost, and so we pulled up and while deciding what to do Sergeant Eadie comes along and finds us." The mess sergeant wiped his brow and sat down on the seat again with an injured air.

"That's the same line o' bull you slung at us yesterday," remarked one of the men, "but where's our blankets an' messkits an' my razor I give twenty francs to the Y. M. C. A. for?"

"Well, what can I do, for Christ's sake?" asked the mess sergeant. "The packs are all in the fourgon. I couldn't carry them up in my hands!"

"Yeh, an' Johnny Spear told us what else went in, too. A barrel o' horse shoes, the travelin' forge, anvil an' all, three days' chow, the picket line an' seven cases o' ammunition. No wonder the wheel broke!"

"Right!" agreed Ham. "It's a wonder the floor didn't fall through. What are we goin' to eat with? I don't want a lot of hot air, I want food."

"There's lots of it here," interrupted the cook. "Come supper-time you'll get your share."

"They want we should feed it to 'em with a spoon, too," said the mess sergeant. "Well, now to show you that my heart's in the right place, I'll tell you what to do. There's quite a pile of tin cans there in the woods that came from some outfit that's been putting out tomatoes steady for the last three meals. Well, you catch hold of a tin can and you can fill it with slum and spear the meat out with a horse shoe nail. That's my advice, take it or leave it."

Without further discussion the men went to look for the pile of cans, for there were liable not to be enough to go around. Eadie and Ham went likewise.

"What's the idea of him yelling so loud?" asked Eadie, as the two entered the woods.

"Shshsh!" said Ham. "Connor has got a tent in here. Old Greasy Shirt wanted to be sure the shavey heard the alibi. I haven't heard Connor's side of it, but he should have known better. He had no business to unload them wagons at five o'clock."

"Where's the P. C., Ham?" asked Eadie suddenly.

"I don't know," said Ham. "How would I know? There's the top kick coming, ask him."

"Hey!" called Eadie. The first sergeant stopped and Eadie went toward him. "There's a slight matter," Eadie went on, "that I'd like to know about. Is there an order out giving me authority to wear a wound stripe?"

"There is," said the first sergeant. "I have it here." He reached into the leather case in which he carried the battery records and which he always kept with him, suspended from his shoulder by a strap. "There it is, G. H. Q., A. E. F., the following named enlisted men and all that. You'd better keep it on you."

"I will," said Eadie, taking the thin slip of paper. "I want everything to be regulation about this stripe, because I've got a hunch that I'll never rate another."

"So have I," said the first sergeant, with a suspicion of a grin. "They might give you a stripe once for gettin' scared stiff, but they never would again. When you didn't show up this last time didn't I think for sure you was in it again with shell shock?" The first sergeant moved away, swinging his shoulders and dragging his leg behind him.

"He's a great kidder, ain't he?" said Ham.

"Isn't he?" agreed Eadie absent-mindedly. "Well, they can all go to hell. If Black Jack says I rate a wound stripe I rate it, even if I was evacuated for a cold in the head. Come on, let's hunt ourselves a can to eat out of."

The battery got away at nightfall in a storm of curses. The loss of the firing battery's baggage had become quickly known, but it was only when the battery formed column that the real nature of the disaster was apparent. There was no wheeled transport whatever, and what little baggage the battery had left was carried on the limbers and caissons. The ration cart had been lost and the rations were piled indiscriminately on the rolling kitchen and on the steps of the gun limbers. The battery's spare horses were still missing, and as several teams had succumbed to the rigors of the march across No Man's Land on the day after the drive, several of the carriages had only four teams instead of the usual six. But one extra caisson was left and since that had but the one team hauling it, it could not be loaded. The battery had no ammunition, but they could have used the caisson to carry feed and oats, tarpaulins, or picks and shovels on.

As for the men, they had no blankets, many of them had lost their slickers, nearly all had lost their toilet articles, and all of them were without messkits. There was no hope that any of the lost baggage or horses would ever be found, for it was strewn all the way from Boucq to Saint Mihiel and what had not been garnered by support troops would be rapidly seized by the salvage companies. But then, since the battery had been taken out of the lines, they must be going into rest billets, and would have an opportunity to refit. Be that as it might, the ensuing time was likely to be unpleasant.

Eadie began the march by himself. He had had very little sleep and a great deal of fatigue for the last week and, his meals having been irregular, he had some doubts of his being able to keep up on a long march. It was his intention therefore to follow the spare caisson, to hang his gas mask, pistol belt and overcoat thereon, and thus lighten himself as much as possible. He was thankful

he had chosen an obscure position, for while the battery yet stood in column ready to move out, a balloon company appeared, following a grunting truck, and proceeded to haul a balloon to earth right in the midst of the waiting men. The battery received the order to march just at the most interesting minute, when the drivers had dismounted and half the column was watching the arrival of the balloon. The first sergeant's remarks were burning, especially to the non-commissioned officers who had allowed the men to leave ranks. Eadie chuckled in the shelter of his caisson.

The march began southward along a road that roared with northbound traffic, mostly tractor-drawn batteries of 155 G. P. F.'s, the French long range six-inch gun. Going north to bombard the fortifications of Metz, Eadie thought. The night was clear and the southern sky, in the direction of Toul, glittered with the finger-like beams of the searchlights sweeping and sweeping, hunting for enemy aircraft. Once caught in a searchlight beam, the aviator would be dazzled by the light to the point where he could no longer control his machine, at the same time becoming a target for the anti-aircraft guns. Every now and then a plane would be lighted up by a beam, other beams would be swung on it, and there in the glare of two or three lights would be a tiny silver moth, spitting tracer bullets in the hope of breaking a light or injuring the personnel of the searchlight. Sometimes the plane came down, a long trail of fire like a shooting star, but more often it managed to slip out of the beam and disappear in the darkness.

This was the first time, thought Eadie, that he had really had a chance to compose his mind, to take account of stock as it were, since he had come back to the battery. Disgusted with the frightful food, the heat and the overcrowding of the replacement camp, whither he

had been sent from hospital, he and Darcy, who had come down to the camp shortly after Eadie, had decided to desert from the camp and rejoin their outfit. They were strengthened in this determination by the letter Eadie had received from the personnel officer, but these letters had only been sent to men in Vittel and Neufchâteau, hospital centers near the regimental area at that time, and before Eadie received his letter he had left the hospital and was on the other side of France. No matter, once he had rejoined the battery, the discouragements, the hunger, the wet nights spent in box cars, the flights from the police, the few hours of rest snatched in flea-ridden barns, all was forgotten.

The caissons clanked along the road and the steady pound, pound, of the horses' hoofs continued. There was no conversation, for the men were tired. It was black on the road and Eadie could see nothing but the caisson bumping ahead of him. At times a shadowy figure on horseback went up and down the column. Probably the first sergeant or one of the officers hunting for men riding in the carriages. Eadie laughed. Who was it that told him the artillery always rode? It was as grave an offense to mount a carriage on the march as it was to refuse duty. Only the cooks could ride the kitchen, for they must be awake the next day to cook the men's meals. Darcy, Eadie had heard, had been appointed a K. P. or cook's helper, so that he would not have to make the hikes. What, thought the sergeant a little bitterly, had the battery commander cared whether he, Eadie, had been in hospital or not? But then, no one seemed to realize that Eadie had been wounded. It had been that way from the first. In the evacuation hospital the sergeant had heard them say, "What's the matter with him?"

"Gas."

"Let him wait."

On the hospital train, "These three men haven't much the matter with 'em, just gas, let 'em sleep on the same bunk."

At the hospital, "What's the matter with you, buddie?"

"Gas."

"Well, you can walk. The ambulance is for wounded. It's just a piece, anyway."

"Jesus," muttered Eadie aloud, "you'd think I did it purposely. I didn't ask them to evacuate me."

Eadie had been knocked unconscious by a shell during the counter attack on the Marne and, though untouched by any fragment, he had been left for dead all night, which in an area that had been heavily gassed, resulted in his not only being evacuated for shock but for gas inhalation also. At the time he had been wounded he had been on a bridge hunting mission, which for various reasons had been somewhat prolonged, all of which had given rise to rumors that he had gone over the hill. This was the polite army way of saying that he had deserted in the face of the enemy.

The road swung off to the right, through a series of freezing swamps. Eadie, who always carried his overcoat and slicker with him and hence had not lost them, was thankful for their warmth, but many a poor gunner, in nothing but his blouse, suffered terribly. The roadbed was hard and the continual pounding of the hobnails thereon made the march twice as tiring as it would have been over softer ground. The column halted from time to time during which the men sat down beside the road and shivered. They began to get back into country untouched by war. As the increasing cold told Eadie that the night had ended and the next day had begun its course, the column came to a series of canals and, after following them a while, to a city. The wall of the first house bore the name of this place, Commercy. The towns in the

zone of the armies were always plainly marked so that the truck drivers and commanders of marching troops could the more easily follow their maps.

"Ah," thought Eadie, "billets!" A roof to keep off the rain, clean hay to sleep in, tables so that a man could sit down when he ate. The column clattered on, through the dark deserted streets, and continued without halt into the open country again. How long was this march going to last? Eadie had several times thought of mounting the caisson, but the shadowy horsemen were too alert. He wondered if he could get on the carriage and by watching ahead, jump off whenever one of those riders appeared. But suppose he went to sleep? That would have to be chanced. Just as his courage had arrived at the sticking point and he was about to clamber aboard the caisson, the column went by a limousine drawn up beside the road and empty.

"The hawks are abroad," muttered Eadie, and sure enough, a few paces further on, he discovered a group of specters, black blotches in the black shadow of a tree. From the size of the limousine, this group was either the brigade or divisional commander with his staff. They had driven along the line of march, parked their car and descended to view the column and note the condition of its march-discipline. The various unit commanders would know the result of the survey in the morning and a cold letter would request an explanation of men riding carriages, drivers asleep, too great an interval between sections, dismounted men not marching in correct formation, or any of the other numerous faults that tired, sleepy men are liable to commit on a night march. Eadie took comfort in the thought that the march could not continue after daylight, for fear of observation by enemy planes. Yet suppose they had covered enough ground in the night to be out of reach of such observation? Why

could not the march continue the next day? If it did, decided Eadie, the battery was going to lose at least one member of its personnel.

The next halt was quite a long one and after the march was resumed, the column had not moved ten yards before it halted again. Again a long halt, again a short advance, and Eadie knew that the end of the march had been reached. Sure enough, in a few minutes the caisson turned off into a field and Eadie heard some one calling his name.

"Here!" answered the sergeant, none too cheerfully, for he feared that he might be slated for some unpleasant duty. It was Ham's voice, however, that hailed him again from a short distance. "Here I am," said Eadie. "What do you want?"

"Shshshsh!" said Ham. "Listen, you got a warm overcoat, haven't you? Well, I got hold of Baldy and Short Mack and we swiped a tarp off the second section. Now we can put our slickers and your overcoat down and the tarp over us and we'll all sleep close and keep ourselves warm."

"Bright thought," agreed Eadie, "but let's not sleep anywhere near the battery in case the second section go hunting their tarp."

"Flop it here," said some one from the darkness. "There's no road here, because there's a creek the other side o' them bushes."

They threw down their slickers, Eadie spread his overcoat, and then the four men crawled under the tarpaulin, which, being of heavy canvas, would not only help to keep them warm, but would be impervious in case of rain. The men lay down fully dressed and pulling their helmets on one side so that their heads rested in the padded interior as on a pillow, listened a minute or two to the poor drivers unharnessing. Then, thankful that they had

no horse to take care of, nor any gun to wheel into park, the men under the tarpaulin fell asleep.

It was noon before Eadie became conscious of a bony elbow in his ribs.

"Hey, roll over!" he exclaimed, at the same time shoving with his own elbow.

"Who'n hell yuh shovin'?" muttered a sleepy voice and the man next him shoved back the tarpaulin and sat up. "Well, boys," said this man, "if it ain't broad day! No reveille, I guess. I wonder when we eat?"

Eadie rolled up an eye at the other man and noticed that his right sleeve bore the imprint of recently removed chevrons.

"Aren't you gas corporal any more, Baldy?" he exclaimed in surprise. "You never said you were broke the other night."

"I didn't have time," said Baldy, pulling out first one leg and then the other, and getting painfully to his feet. "You're a good lad, Eadie, an' I like you, but you kick like a yearlin' steer. I'd as lief sleep with a jug head. You been barkin' my shins all night. Take off them hobnails to-morrer, will yuh?"

"Yah," scoffed Eadie, "and get them full of rain, huh? Or find some jasper has swapped them for an old pair in the night. Tell me, what did they skin your stripes off you for?"

"Aw, shut up, you two, fer the love of Gawd, an' let a man sleep," muttered some one from under the tarp.

"Louder!" replied Eadie. "It's time you were up anyway."

"I'll get up an' put a shine on your eye it'll take a week to rub off," said the voice wrathfully, whereat Eadie grinned. The wrathful man was Short Mack, another instrument sergeant, a man who was not quite the regulation height but who had slipped into the army somehow.

In war time an inch or so less in height is an advantage. A short man doesn't have so far to go to duck a shell, and bullets that would kill a taller man fly over his head.

"Go on, Baldy," said Eadie, "tell us. I'm interested."

"I'll tell you," said Short, sitting up and displaying his baby face red with wrath. "He went off and got stinking drunk. And served him damn well right to get broke. And there's others it wouldn't hurt to get broke, or the battery either."

"It was when we was in rest billets," began Baldy. "I don't know who gets a rest in 'em, but then—. Well, we were doin' a problem and I had a squad. I represented a squadron of cavalry. All we did was to ride along a road and wait for some one to locate us. It got tiresome after a while and just then we spotted a limousine and a bunch of sidecars. By God, thinks I, we're on the rolls as artillery, but this is a regiment of cavalry just the same, and here's a chance for cavalry tactics. I was chose to lead that squad because I was a cavalryman anyway. So here's opportunity, thinks I. 'As foragers,' I yells, 'open out, you lasters, draw, saber, charge!' We didn't have no sabers, but we put on a good charge, even if there was only me and Tommy Scullen and Jew Lippman. An' we charged right round that limousine and there was some general and a bunch of bastards all having a little drink.

"'You're my prisoners,' I yells.

"'Who the hell are you?' says one of the bastards, his face all red an' gettin' ready to do a bumpsclawl on me.

"'I'm a squadron o' cavalry,' says I."

There was a crow of laughter from Short Mack, and Ham in his turn sat up grinning.

"Go on," urged Eadie.

"That's all," said Baldy, bending over to rewrap his puttees. "I come home an' the next day I was broke."

"That's a new version," said Short. "The way I heard it Lieutenant Sawyer and the top went out looking for this cavalry when they didn't show up after the problem, and found the horses running wild and the three 'cavalrymen' flat in the road. And when they asked Baldy how come, he said the squadron had run into a machine gun ambush and they were all casualties."

" 'Tain't so," said Baldy. "I'm tellin' you straight. The general got up a lie to save his face. He didn't want every one to know I caught him taking a drink."

The four men's toilets were soon made. It consisted of hanging on their gas masks and straightening their helmets.

"Let's make a track down to the kitchen," suggested Eadie, "and see when we eat and then let's have a look at the country. There might be a salvage pile we could get some blankets out of."

They left Short Mack to guard the tarpaulin and the other three went along the edge of the field toward the kitchen and were told that dinner and breakfast combined would be served in an hour. Camp had been made beside a country road and all the length of it they could see carriages, kitchens, and men, some walking and some still asleep. Just off the edge of the road Eadie paused beside the figure of a man who snored peacefully, his head pillowed on his mask, and two startlingly new blankets over him.

"Who the hell is this with all the new blankets and the trick pack?"

"It's one of the replacements we got for the medical corps," said Ham. "The pill rollers carry those packs now."

"Everything nice and new," observed Eadie.

The three of them went down the road with some idea of visiting the echelon and inquiring about the pros-

pect of mail. Artillery at the front was divided into two parts, the firing battery, composed of the guns and their crews, the telephone and observation details, and the echelon, composed of the spare gunners, the drivers, the supply sergeant and his assistants, and the stable sergeant and *his* assistants. The echelons of all the batteries marched together and camped together, entirely separate from the firing battery at all times. When the battery was in action the echelon was some distance in rear, but when it was on the march the echelon usually pitched camp within walking distance of the batteries. The men could see it at a little distance, the hoods of the American escort wagons looming above the long picket lines.

"I just happened to think," said Baldy suddenly, "I promised Shorty I wouldn't be gone long. I told him I'd just go down to the road and back. Poor kid, he's back there guardin' our tarp. I think I'll go back and talk to him a little." Baldy, coughing slightly, as though he were embarrassed, took his departure, and hastened back along the road. The other two continued on to the echelon.

"I used to know a driver of one of those escort wagons," said Eadie. "Remember that big red-headed brute that came over with me in the casual company? I haven't seen him since we were on the Marne. I wonder if he's still with the outfit."

"Go on in an' look for him," said Ham. "I'll wait here. I don't want to go in there. A man is liable to run into the colonel or some one and then there's a lot of explainin' to do about how you tore your blouse and when did you cut your hair last, and report to your B. C. to give you some work to do so you won't be running around bothering people."

"All right," agreed Eadie, "I won't be a minute."

"And ask about mail, too," said Ham. "The only time we get any is when we're out of the lines. They ain't got guts enough to bring it up to us when there's any fightin' goin' on."

Eadie went on into the field where the echelon was camped and directed his steps toward the wagon park, where he knew the supply company must be camped. He found a sergeant there, whom he knew slightly, and demanded of him the whereabouts of one Red Jake.

"Red Jake?" said the sergeant. "I know where he is. He's over callin' on Judge Duffy. He was a corporal when he went in, but he won't be when he comes out."

"My God!" cried Eadie. "All they seem to do in this outfit is peel stripes off people. What did Jake do, get torched up?"

"No," said the sergeant, "he and another bird gathered a wagon load o' souvenirs. You know how thick they was up there and if a man didn't have to lug 'em all on his back he could have carried away enough Lugers and stuff to outfit a regiment. All of us put a few things away in the jockey box or somewheres. Well, Jake wasn't satisfied with that. He corrals one o' them B. C. telescopes that the boche had on little carts, the kind that stretch out to about twenty feet, and he hoists it into a wagon and covers it over with hay bales. Then him and the driver tries to sell it to a Y. M. C. A. man."

"And the 'Y' man turned 'em in?"

"Sure did. I guess they wanted too much for it. Well, Judge Duffy invites him over to tell him what they mean by appropriatin' government property."

"Well, when he comes back tell him Sergeant Eadie was looking for him. Tell him I'm back with the battery again and I'd like to see him."

"I'll tell him," said the other sergeant, "if he don't get sent to Gievres before I see him."

Eadie went back to the road and noting without surprise that Ham had gone, thoughtfully retraced his steps to the firing battery's camp. He turned in toward the camp from the road and looked once or twice in the direction of the sleeping medical corps replacement. Eadie noticed that this man had thrown off the blankets that had formerly covered him, as though he had found their heat oppressive.

"I thought as much," muttered Eadie to himself, and walked nearer the recumbent man. The replacement still slept, but of his blankets there was no sign.

Furthermore, his pack, the haversack part of which had been closed with rawhide lacings, now lay open, the lacings neatly slit down their length.

"Huh!" commented Eadie. He looked closer. The sleeping man had pillowed his head on a miscellaneous array of objects, a canteen, a bacon and condiment can, his extra shoes, and his messkit. Over these he had his folded shelter half. It was clear that this man, to prevent the theft of these articles of his equipment, had put them beneath his head so that any disturbance of them would awaken him. Eadie's eye rested fondly on the messkit.

On the far edge of the field, near the bushes that shaded the creek, Baldy was sadly inspecting the tin can that served him as messkit. He had made an ineffective attempt to wash it in the creek, but the results had been very meager. Short Mack was stretched on his stomach upon two new blankets, smoking, and Ham was occupied in shaving in front of a steel mirror hung to a twig. Into this peaceful scene Eadie thrust himself.

"I knew it!" he announced without introduction, "a poor pill-rolling John! And you birds may some day be yelling to him for first aid."

"What's eatin' you?" demanded Short Mack belliger-

ently. "You must be lookin' for some one to knock you into a tail spin!"

"If you talk to me like that I won't bring you home any more candy," grinned Eadie. "Baldy, you don't mean to say you were cruel enough to rob that poor sleeping John!" Eadie looked meaningly at the blankets.

"I didn't rob no John," said Baldy sadly. "His blankets was gone when I got back to him."

"Sergeant," cried an excited voice, "some one has cleaned me out while I was asleep!"

All turned. The erstwhile sleeping replacement, unnoticed, had come panting up to the group, his hand shaking with excitement and his eyes protruding with anger and excitement. His length of service had indeed been short, for he had the recruit's habit of rushing to a non-commissioned officer with every grievance.

"That so?" said Eadie. "What did they take off you, money?"

"My blankets, my razor, an' my messkit! First I woke up, after my blankets got stolen, but I was up all last night and couldn't stay awake, so I started to put my pack under my head and I found *that* had been broken open. And so I laid down for just another snooze and while I was asleep they got my messkit out right from under my ear!"

The replacement's eye wandered wildly. It halted once at Shorty, stretched out on the new blankets and again at Ham, who shaved peacefully. Shorty, with his child's face and innocent blue eyes, looked absent-mindedly across the road and began to sing.

"Oh, up on the Marne this last July,
The boche was headin' for Montmirail,
An' the G. I. cans was showerin' down like rain.

But the 'Teenth, the Tenth, and the Seventy-six,
They handed the Huns a coupla licks,
An' Jerry went hurriedly marchin' home again.
Oh! Fritz!
Yuh better put up your mitts!
When the dandy Third Brigade is after you!"

"Them's my blankets he's settin' on," said the replacement in a hoarse whisper to Eadie.

"Are those your blankets, Short?" asked Eadie.

"Sure they are!" cried Short. "Come over here, John What's-your-name? It ain't Mack, is it? No! Well, if you can read, roll your eye up and down that!"

Eadie, looking over the replacement's shoulder, could see the name Mack, which was Short's, written in several places with an indelible pencil on the blankets.

"Maybe you think this is your razor," said Ham, coming over. "Look it over!"

"No," said the replacement, "mine was a nice new one. That ain't mine."

"Didn't you have your things marked with your name?" asked Eadie.

"No, not a thing," said the replacement, "only my gas mask."

"I'll give you a bit of advice," said Eadie. "When you're at the front, mark everything you've got with your name in just as big letters as you can, and then keep it on you all the time. If you can tie the stuff to you with wire, so much the better. We're all sergeants here, we wouldn't steal your stuff!"

"See that?" cried Short, holding up his blouse to the replacement, "see the stripes? I'm a sergeant! Get the hell out of here!"

"How did you camouflage his razor, Ham?" asked Eadie, as the replacement went sadly away.

"It wasn't his razor, it was mine," said Ham. "I always keep it in my shirt. All I took of his was the blades. The razor is round there in the grass somewhere."

"It's a dirty trick to go pick on a poor John," said Baldy. "Why, we hadn't been gone a minute this morning before Short was down there like a wolf on a sheep and away with that poor boy's blankets an' writin' his own name on 'em."

"You should have seen Baldy jump when he came back an' the blankets was gone," said Short. "I could see him way from here."

There was a loud wail from somewhere near the kitchen and a voice bellowed, "Come an' git it!"

Soldiers began to run that way from all directions. Baldy and Short began to put on their blouses and Ham, having hurriedly wiped his face, the three seized their tin cans and went toward the kitchen.

"What are you going to eat with?" demanded Baldy, seeing that Eadie was empty-handed. The sergeant grinned and produced a messkit from beneath his blouse.

"If you think I stole it, look at my name," said he, and displayed the name 'Eadie' carved on both top and bottom.

"Oh, you clever dip!" cried Shorty. "How'd you get the letters to look so old?"

"I rubbed grease off the rollin' kitchen on 'em," replied Eadie.

Chapter IV

NIGHT MARCHES

AT dusk they hitched in the teams and formed column on the edge of the field. Eadie, waiting in the ditch for the order to move out, heard his name called.

"Here!" he answered.

"There he is," said some one, "sittin' down there by that caisson that's only got one team on it."

Eadie, looking up, beheld a huge hulking figure coming his way along the column.

"Well, if it isn't Jake!" he cried. "What are you doing away from the supply company, aren't you lost?"

"Not me," replied Jake. "I belong to 'A' battery now!" He and Eadie shook hands and Jake sat down in the ditch beside the sergeant. He was a huge man; his great hands looked like hams and were covered with freckles and red hair as coarse as a horse's mane. More red hair peeked from under his helmet, and the collar of his blouse, too small for his bull neck, was always unhooked.

"I heard you were in some kind of a jam," said Eadie. "You should have known better than to try to sell stuff to a Y. M. C. A. guy."

"That's a dirty lie," said Jake, "that wasn't it at all. This here 'Y' man, he asked for a lift an' we give it to him. It's agin orders to have any one ride them escort wagons. Well, I says give him a ride and we give it to him. This was a week ago, when we was luggin' hay to Royameix. Well, the night before the drive, damn if this 'Y' man didn't see me poundin' up the road an' come

runnin' after me an' give me a plug o' terbaccer. 'He's a white man,' says I to myself. So then the day before yesterday, when we was pitchin' camp near some old jerry dugouts, a guy comes an' says he's found a telescope. An' sure enough he had. I right off doped I'd give it to the 'Y' guy for a coupla more plugs o' eatin' terbaccer an' I hunted him up an' told him, like a damn fool, right in front of a coupla majors. "Can't give away enemy property,' they says. 'Everything must be turned in.' 'Very good,' I says. So I went back an' took the damn thing, cart an' all an' threw it in the creek. So when the two majors come over arguin' as to which of 'em was to have the telescope, I says it's in the creek, kicks off the brake an' tells Pete to drive on. *An'* so, bein' broke for it, I asks for a transfer to 'A' battery, where I knows a sergeant named Eadie. Heffernan said you was back. Where you been? I come over to the battery once to invite yuh to a keg party at Mandres, but they said yuh was sick in hospital. What was the matter with yuh?"

Eadie spat upon his cuff and went through the motions of polishing his wound stripe. "Look that over, Jake," he said.

Jake bent over and looked at the stripe in the dusk.

"Whaddyuh mean?" cried he. "You an' me come over on the same boat! You ain't been in France six months!"

"Oh, God," said Eadie. "Listen, skull! This stripe is on the right cuff. A service stripe goes on the other. Don't you know a wound stripe when you see one?"

"That a wound stripe?" asked Jake with awe.

"Of course it is."

"You'll get hell if they catch yuh wearin' it," said Jake solemnly.

Eadie was still struggling for speech when two more men emerged from the gloom. They were Shorty and Baldy.

"Where you marchin' to-night, back here?" asked Baldy.

"Yes, why?" demanded Eadie. "What's that you're carrying, the tarp?"

"That's what," said Baldy. "We want you should carry it on your caisson. Ham has got to hike with his machine gunners. They've got their guns on Number Four's caisson and we don't dare put the tarp there. We thought we might put it on the step of one of the limbers, but Short said he was fixin' to sleep there."

"You lie, you big whiff of garbage," cried Short. "I hiked every foot of the hike. And I know a man I could turn in if I was a mind to for riding on the trail of one o' the guns."

"Well, what do you say, Eadie?" asked Baldy with a sigh of patience.

"Yup," said Eadie. "I'm going to hike here to-night. It's a nice quiet place and I don't ever have occasion to chase any one back into ranks when they fall out, and I can hang my gas mask and gun and stuff on the caisson."

"You're in luck," commented Baldy. "I tried to do that, but the gang I was marching with thought it was such a good stunt they all did it. I had my slicker and things in the coat rack of a limber. Well, this guy put something in and that guy put something else in, and the first thing I knew there was so much stuff on that limber that the wheel team was lifted so high in the air by the pole, they couldn't get traction. That bein' the case, I didn't see how we would put the tarpauleyun on."

"Give us it," said Eadie, "and I'll look after it. I'm going to hike with this new recruit to-night. His name is Big Jake, or Red Jake, or Snuff Eater. He's the bird that came over in the casual company with me and since

he's just had his arm skun, he's hooked up with 'A' battery to see a little service."

"I know him," said Short, "he's the man that brought you home the night you got orey-eyed at Cokeydawn."

"You've got too good a memory," declared Eadie, "Well, slap that tarp on and get out of here. If the top comes along and sees us he's liable to throw the gravy train in the ditch."

A long sustained sound ran along the column, like that of a freight train getting under way, the click and rattle of pole chains being tightened, of horses being put into their collars, of pole supports being picked up and chained to the steel trail, and the clank of the pintle hook of the limber against the pintle ring of the trail, as the column moved forward.

"You march alongside of me, Jake," said Eadie. "I'm rankest man of this battery after the first sergeant and if any one kicks I'll say I kept you here in case the caisson got mired, to help pull it out again."

Jake was willing enough and as they marched, Eadie related to him the account of his wound and of his stay in hospital. The sergeant and Jake had had a tempestuous time. They had met in a casual company, had come overseas together, been torpedoed, and had gone back to their regiment with a train-load of replacements. Jake had been assigned to the supply company and for this reason had seen little of Eadie, who had all the time been with the firing battery, or on liaison duty with the infantry.

The march of the column was more lively, there was an atmosphere of gayety about that had been absent the night before. The men had had a long night's rest, they had eaten three excellent meals, and most of them had managed to replace their losses by the simple expedient of

plundering replacements or incautious members of other batteries. The men felt their loss lightly, knowing that it would be but a matter of a day or two before they would be reequipped, and since every step brought them farther away from the front and nearer the rest billets, their spirits were very high. They were on their way out, their stomachs were full of bacon and canned beans, and cigarettes were plentiful. What more could a man want?

The march was through rolling country and as it grew darker, a half moon lighted the landscape. The column mounted a long hill, the men breasting it bravely, and from its summit Eadie and Jake could see the line of the marching troops for miles, looped up and down the hills, plainly marked by the glow of thousands of cigarettes.

"Man," cried Jake, "the whole American army must be on this road! Look at 'em, as far as you can see!"

"There may not be any one on the road but our own brigade," said Eadie. "A war strength brigade of field artillery covers two miles and a half of road."

"Yeh, but look at that other road!" Jake pointed across the hills and sure enough, another road was outlined, far, far away, by the tiny red dots of the cigarettes.

"It shows you how far you can see a cigarette butt, doesn't it?" observed Eadie. "I'll remember that the next time I'm at the front."

"Do you know what I think?" said Jake darkly. "I think there won't be no more front. After the way them boche lit out at Saint Mihiel, the war may be over any day. They're licked, I tell you. The reason we got relieved so quick was because the boche was askin' fer peace. You wait an' see."

"Don't believe all you hear," replied Eadie.

They descended the hill and coming nearer the fields at

the bottom, Eadie could see a great number of men and horses, running about in the moonlight, like a hunting scene on an old tapestry.

"What's comin' off here?" muttered Eadie.

"Them?" asked Jake. "Them's men chasin' horses."

"Ah," said Eadie, "I thought they were learning to swim. You great big yoik, don't you suppose I can see? What do they want to chase horses along the sides of a marching column for?"

"Listen to a soldier for a minit," said Jake. "This horse tag is old stuff for us. When we was hikin' up from Mandres we used to play it every night. We must be followin' a John outfit now like we was then. The Johns don't know how to take care o' their goats, d'yuh see, and when a goat lays down, they takes the harness off him an' shoves him into the ditch. Well, he gets up in a hour or so, an' gambols about careless an' free an' as good as ever he was. Then the old hard-boiled regulars comes along and is in one horse, G. I."

"There seem to be a lot of 'em," said Eadie, looking again at the running men and the galloping horses. The men were strangely silent and Eadie decided that they dared not shout lest some one in authority hear and interrupt them in their chase.

"I learned a lot since I come in this outfit," said Jake. "Tell me, you that's supposed to be a walkin' Handbook for Drivers an' Cannoneers, how many public animiles is there in a division?"

"Twenty-seven thousand," answered Eadie.

"Twenty-seven thousand?" cried Jake. "What the hell are you givin' us? Jesus! Well, maybe there are twenty-seven thousand public animals at that. No, but four-footed ones, how many, now? Answer quick without lookin' it up."

"I don't know," said Eadie. "How the hell should I

know? I have all I can do to handle my own end of the business. How many are there?"

"Well, there's close to eight thousand, and if only two or three out of every hundred fall down and won't get up on a march and then get up after the harness is pulled off 'em, there'll be quite a lot of 'em runnin' around. Well, as it is, about two or three in every ten take a flop. Eadie, the horses the French give us ain't worth the bullet to kill 'em. They ain't worth the coal it would take to melt 'em down for glue."

"I know it," said Eadie. "It's lucky the war is nearly over or we'd all be dragging our own guns."

As the night advanced a bank of clouds gradually covered the moon, and shortly after midnight it began to rain heavily, a steady perpendicular downpour. The column that had been marching silently along broke into a chorus of cries and protestations, a weird melody that died away out of hearing, the curses of the men mingled with the rustle of thousands of slickers being donned and the drumming of the rain on a hundred caisson lids.

"Whoo!" said Eadie, ducking his head against the rush of rain, "this will be nice to go to bed in, won't it? It won't last, though, it's coming down too hard."

"It's begun to run down the inside of my putts already," replied Jake. "God, ain't it cold!"

The rain fell through the rest of the march. It came down, so to speak, in surges, falling for a long interval as though the flood gates of heaven had been opened, then gradually dying away to a gentle shower, then with a rush and a whoop, coming down again in torrents. The slickers issued the American army had all been cut very short, ostensibly to keep the bottom of them out of the mud and so prevent the slicker from hindering the wearer's marching. There was, undoubtedly, some other

reason for this circumcision, because the French army throughout the war furnished its soldiers with an overcoat of comfortable length and the marches of the French were just as long as any other army's. The shortness of the American slicker resulted in the draining of the water from its surface onto a very vulnerable and sensitive part of the soldier, the back of his legs, and from there it seeped down inside the puttee into the shoe.

The march itself was tiring enough, but once the men were thoroughly wet, their progress became torture. The rolling hills that they had so gleefully climbed in the moonlight now became mountains, stretching up to unknown heights in the blackness. Eadie and Jake, too tired to talk, pounded along behind the caisson. Jake was in particularly bad luck, for he was not only unused to marching, but he had a full pack on his back over which he had put his slicker, so that he looked like a particularly ferocious hunchback. He dared not take off his pack, even in the darkness, for while a gas mask and pistol belt can be hung on a caisson unseen, a pack bulks too large and the ghostly horsemen of the previous night still splashed their way down the column, wheeled just beyond the caisson, and splashed their way back, spurring and cursing against the beat of the rain.

There were frequent halts, but no one sat down to rest. The two marchers behind the caisson heard no word of command; they ran headlong into the stationary caisson and knew that the column had halted. They leaned their weary heads on the cold steel lid and when the caisson moved away from in front of them they knew that the march had begun again. Eadie's feet burned, the back of his legs ached, his shoulders ached, his head reeled from fatigue. There was not even the changing scenery to relieve the monotony, for he could see nothing

but the dim figure of the caisson's driver hunched on the nigh horse and probably asleep. All else was thick, black chaos, out of which streamed the rain.

"Last night," muttered Jake, during a halt, "I was a corporal an' slept all the hike on a bag of oats."

"You should have known enough not to monkey with the Y. M. C. A.," said Eadie.

"Aw, he was a good lad," replied Jake, "but I never knew it to fail. You go out of your way to do a favor to some one and all yuh get out of it is a stick with the dirty end towards yuh."

"Cheer up," said Eadie, "I've been thinking that I might be able to get you a job on my detail."

"Yeh?" asked Jake with interest. "That'll be fine an' you can get as drunk as you want to and I'll bring you home."

"There's a lot of work to it," admonished Eadie. "This hike to-night is a picnic beside what you'll be expected to do."

"I might be scared," said Jake, "if I didn't know you. Anything that *you* tie yourself up with won't have much more work than would give a man a good appetite."

The march finally came to an end and the carriages were taken off the road and into woods, the leaves of the trees and the underbrush streaming with water. Eadie's caisson was still on the road, waiting its turn to cross the ditch, when the blackness and the falling rain seemed to suddenly crystallize into three figures that Eadie recognized by their shapes to be Baldy, Short, and Ham.

"Quick," said the three wraiths, "off with that damned tarp an' let's get under it. The orders just come from the major to water horses. After a thirty-kilo hike in the rain, by God!"

"They must be thirsty," said Eadie, "but why all the rush to get to bed?"

"There'll be happy hell jumpin' here in another minute," said Ham. "The top won't let any one go to bed before he can and he'll have to be with the horses if he doesn't get to bed until to-morrow noon!"

"It's so black he won't know whether we're there or not, provided he don't see us. Make it fast!"

Ham seized the tarpaulin from the top of the caisson.

"Under the first tree with it," said Eadie. "Put it down and then we fold the rest over us. It's going to be a wet bed whatever way we fix it."

"Who the hell is this?" demanded Ham, running against Jake in the darkness.

"It's Red Jake," said Eadie, "the big guy that came back with me to Coetquidan. He's going to be a member of the liaison detail, so he'll sleep with us."

There was a half minute of silence.

"That'll make five under one tarp," observed Short Mack finally.

"But he's got two blankets, hasn't he?" cried Eadie. "Use that limburger cheese you've got in place of brains. With the two we've got already, that's four blankets over us and two extra blankets aren't to be found on every bush this weather."

There was no more comment after that, the five men put down the tarp, spread their slickers on it, lay down and covered themselves with the four blankets, and then pulled the rest of the tarp over themselves. Then snuggling close to each other for warmth, they were soon asleep.

Ten days after the battery had been relieved at Saint Mihiel, they were camped in a mysterious wood, somewhere back of the front. They knew they were not far from the lines, for at least once a day an anti-aircraft battery in rear of them would open fire on a hostile plane and trumpeters were stationed at different parts of the

wood to blow "attention" every time they heard an airplane. When this call was sounded, every one was supposed to get under cover.

The men had been in that wood for four days. Six nights they had spent on the march, night after night of rain, and mud, and fatigue, night after night of clubbing tired horses to their feet, of dodging trucks, of snatching a minute's rest by riding the trail of a carriage, of sleeping in wet woods in wetter blankets, nights of rumors, of contradictory orders, and of every kind of misery that hastily formed, ignorant staffs inflict on hastily formed armies. There was no system of supply nor even an attempt at one, so that the battery replaced its losses by theft. They stole food, messkits, blankets, horses, and harness. They even stole transport, with small success, however, for wagons are always marked with the name of their proper organization. Baffled at this, the battery stole carts from the farmhouses along the line of march. This also was a failure, for the inhabitants of that region had become accustomed to soldiers through four long years and knew at once where to look for anything they found missing. Finally, then, the battery had come to these woods, and had spent a delicious four days there doing nothing.

In the shelter of a pile of hay bales sat four men. It was a cold gray day with a biting wind and the hay formed a pleasant windbreak. These men were Eadie, Short Mack, Baldy and Jake, and they were having a morning's schooling in the duties of the liaison detail. Short Mack was asleep, Jake and Baldy were shooting jawbone crap for their next month's wages, and Eadie was rolling a cigarette and wishing he was with Ham and the machine gunners. They were off in a field learning how to shoot captured German machine guns. Eadie

had gone out with them the day before, had had a huge afternoon and had killed an incautious hen that had invaded the improvised range from the neighboring farmyard. This being reported to Eadie's captain by the officer in charge of the machine gunners, the captain had formed a school for the liaison detail and placed Eadie in charge of it. Red Jake, not without doubt and distrust on the captain's part, had become a member of the liaison detail, vice one O'Toole, a silk hat Irishman, who was going away to school to learn how to be an officer.

Eadie had a map, a firing table, and a number of books spread before him in case an officer should appear. From one of these books he read aloud, more to keep Short Mack awake than for any other reason.

"The main objections," read Eadie aloud, "to pigeons as a method of liaison are that they can only be employed from front to rear and not for flank communications, the messages sent by them must be coded, they cannot be used for carrying messages by night, and they cannot be used in a war of movement because they cannot find their way to a dovecote whose position is constantly changing."

"How much does a pound of pigeon's milk weigh?" asked Short, without opening his eyes.

"Ugh!" grunted Jake, "comin' out for a point! Hah, six! Jump up, six, four an' two, show yourselves to daddy!"

"Four an' three, you know me!" chanted Baldy in response.

Eadie put down his book and craned his neck around the pile of bales to look at the kitchen. The long, folding table had been set up and two pans of bread were already on it. The cook, holding one end of a pole, the other end of which was supported by the K. P., was hooking out a marmite of coffee, which was placed at the end of the

table where the K. P. could ladle out half a cup to each man as he went by.

"It's getting near chow-time," said Eadie. Short at once sat up and the two crap shooters suspended operations for a look at the kitchen. Simultaneously with the appearance of the machine gun detail marching in from the range, a trumpeter took his station in an open place in the woods and began to finger his trumpet, blow out the mouthpiece, and consult his wrist watch. Eadie at once gathered up his map and books and tucked them out of sight under a bale of hay. Then each member of the liaison detail drew a messkit from under his blouse, and waited in the attitude of a man about to run a race.

"He'll blow chow right on top of recall like he did yesterday," said Eadie, "and we'll be first in line. Now you birds will be thankful you've got a man in charge of you that thinks about little things such as holding school right near the kitchen, and giving the tip to bring messkits with you."

"You'll make me cry," remarked Short. "Of course this thoughtful guy never thought about havin' himself right near the slum cannon."

The trumpeter slapped the mouthpiece into his trumpet and taking a preliminary breath or two, blew "recall," then drawing breath again, he started to blow "mess." Hardly had five notes issued from the trumpet when there was a sound like a rising tempest, the sound of six hundred odd men leaping to their feet and running at top speed for their respective kitchens. Before the tables they came to a plunging, shoving halt, rattling their messkits and crowding eagerly into line. A cloud of brown dust rose and settled on the waiting food, but it was good clean vegetable dust, made from powdered leaves and decayed pine needles, and would not hurt the food the slightest.

Behind the table stood the two cooks. One served the meat—fried steaks of most appetizing odor—and ladled a spoonful of a kind of sauce, made of the grease from the fried meat stirred up with flour and canned tomatoes into each messkit. The other served out one canned apricot and a little dab of oleo, putting them on the lid of the messkit. The messkit was composed of two parts, a deep oval dish, with a folding handle, into which was put all the main components of the meal, and a flat lid, on which was placed whatever served as dessert, canned apricots, rice and prunes, stale bread sprinkled with cinnamon and called pudding, or the old reliable, ever ready, Karo syrup. The messkit was held in one hand, the lid being supported on the handle, and since the dessert, of whatever form, always had some liquid component, it required a great deal of address to keep said liquid from running off the lid and all over the soldier's hand.

The messkit once full, the soldier extended his left hand, in which he held a tin cup. This cup also had a folding handle, a handle that was secured by the weakest and most treacherous of fastenings, so that the slightest jar would unfix it, and the cup, swinging like the bucket of a dumping machine, would empty its load of coffee on the ground or down some eating soldier's neck. The K. P. standing by the coffee can filled the cup and the mess sergeant, last in line, placed a slice of bread, either on the cup or on the messkit, as the soldier indicated. The soldier then sought a place to sit carefully and gingerly down, rest his messkit beside him and eat.

"I'll say this," remarked Eadie, kneeling carefully down and lowering first cup and then messkit to the ground, "this is as fine a meal as I've had for some time." He looked around for Ham and the rest of his gang. Ham and Short were already making their way cautiously

toward him, and Jake and Baldy were about two-thirds served.

"The chow hounds have got too much in their messkits to run around to the rear of the line still eatin'," remarked Ham. "Yuh can't eat with both hands full. Yesterday them wops took to their heels and got into line again the minute they was served. And then they stood in line and gulped down fast to get their messkit empty by the time they got to the tables again."

"They ought to put a stop to that," said Eadie. A long blast of a whistle interrupted him.

"Tenshun!" bellowed the first sergeant, who had taken his stand near the mess line, where all could hear him. The clatter of the messkits and the scrape of spoon on pan were instantly stilled.

"This afternoon," said the first sergeant when all was quiet, "the battery will take a bath. All duty will be suspended but that of bathin'. Gun crews and the different details will be brought up by their section chiefs and checked off on the roll. No one excused. No one! All buckets to be brought to the mess sergeant directly after dinner. The liaison detail will report to me right after dinner to cut wood, dig a hole, and rig up tarpaulins for a bath house. They will also keep the fire goin' an' the water hot. Is there any one that did not hear me?"

"How come the liaison detail?" muttered Eadie aghast.

"Ah!" said the first sergeant, looking haughtily at Eadie down his nose, "little game of crap behind the hay bales this morning, eh? Thought I didn't see, eh? The brain squad will do a little work with their hands this afternoon and it will not be rolling bones, either."

The grinning faces of a hundred odd men were turned toward Eadie. He proceeded to eat with burning ears and made no comment. As for Baldy and Jake, they grinned sheepishly.

"That's all!" barked the first sergeant, and the clatter of feeding began again.

The liaison detail reported after dinner. They dug a hole for a fire, put handspikes over it to form a grate, cut wood for fuel, and rigged two tarpaulins to form a shelter against the biting wind. Then, having filled several buckets and a G. I. can with water, they set them on the grate and started the fire. It was hard and arduous work, especially the rigging of the tarpaulin, for the canvas was wet and stiff and the wind blew it down as fast as they got it up. That Eadie and Short Mack were both sergeants and supposedly exempt from manual labor made no difference. They worked with the rest. If they kicked at working as sergeants they would probably be working as privates the next day.

The bathers began to arrive and under the supervision of the first sergeant, they entered the bath house, undressed, scrubbed themselves well, dressed, and came out again. The sections followed each other in order and the liaison detail, who really formed the fifth section, bathed in their turn.

Eadie was putting on his clothes and Red Jake had just appeared with two buckets full of water and the news that the water cart had gone for another load, and that he had plundered the supply the cook had saved for the supper's coffee.

"Sergeant Eadie," called the first sergeant from without the tent, "report to the battery commander."

Jake and Short looked soberly at Eadie, while the latter sergeant's heart did a sickening flop. He brushed his hands and went out.

The battery commander led Eadie a little bit away from the men waiting to take their baths and, having cleared his throat, began.

"Sergeant, we're going to another party. The bat-

talion commander has asked for a sergeant who can adjust fire and repair telephone lines to accompany the liaison officer. Well, now, there's only one N. C. O. in the battalion that can do that, and that's yourself, so you'll have to go along. Take one other man and report to the battalion right away. Have you had your bath?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, make it fast to the battalion then. Who are you going to take with you?"

"I think I'll take the new man," said Eadie, "the big red-headed guy."

"That gorilla?" cried the captain. "Why, he'll never be of any use. He hasn't the brains or the education to make a liaison man."

"That's true, sir," said Eadie, "but he'll do what I tell him to."

"Well, suit yourself," said the captain. "I understand that Mack and some other man will relieve you after twenty-four hours. You're going with the infantry of some other division, the way you did at Saint Mihiel."

"Is this going to be the same kind of a picnic, sir?"

"No," said the captain, slowly, "this is going to be a real, old issue, Mark 1 scrap. That's the reason for the extra food this noon."

"Ah, sure, I should have known," said Eadie. "Well, now, what will I do for maps and stuff?"

"There's a lieutenant going with you," replied the captain. "He'll do all the work. You're going along as a sort of dog-robber, and to take his place if he's a casualty. I understand the infantry wanted an artillery officer with every company. They must think we have officers to throw away. Well, good luck if I don't see you again."

Eadie went hurriedly back to the improvised bath house and put on his blouse. The first sergeant regarded him with disgust. It was clear that the top knew the subject

of the conversation between Eadie and the captain, for he made no remark, but nodded his head sagely.

"Put down those buckets, Jake," said Eadie. "Put on your blouse and come with me."

"Where are you going?" cried Short Mack, who stoked the fire, his face the color of roast beef.

"He's going up to the front to shoot crap in a shell hole for a couple of days and get shell shock again," remarked the top. "Eadie, if I had your luck I'd be satisfied to be born a Chink."

"What's all this?" cried Short.

"Another party, Short," replied Eadie. "I'll see you and Baldy to-morrow night, up on the lines. Come on, Jake."

"Caisson section, come on in!" bellowed the first sergeant, and Jake and Eadie took their departure.

Under the tree that sheltered the liaison detail's tarpaulin, Eadie made his preparations. In his musette, a small bag he carried slung from one shoulder, he put his toilet articles, a towel, two short lengths of candle, a box of pistol ammunition, two well sharpened pencils, a small can of beans and a tin box of hardtack. In his pockets he had a knife, a notebook, a flashlight, a briquet, matches, and cigarettes. He belted on his pistol and canteen, rolled overcoat and slicker and slung them across his breast, and hung his gas mask over all.

"After a week of theft and barter," said Eadie to Jake, "I managed to gather quite an outfit. The only thing I lack is a pair of field glasses, but if the night is dark enough I'll have 'em before daylight. Look, Jake, don't take anything that you can do without, because you've got to carry it on your back, you know. I wish I had a pack carrier, but I haven't, so I can't take any blankets. Never mind, I've got a good thick overcoat I picked out after a whole afternoon's hunt at Le Corneau. I damn

near got caught with it, too. The birds that lived in the barracks where I got it came back a half hour early from drill."

"What are we going to do?" asked Jake.

"Nothing," said Eadie, "but go along with a bunch of doughboys and get a chance at some souvenirs. They are going to pull some kind of an attack, but it doesn't mean anything now. The boche pull out when the bombardment begins. Come on, I can see the gang clustering around the battalion now. The outfit marches to-night, too."

The two went over to the tent that served as battalion P. C. where an officer, coming to the door at that instant, demanded to know if they were the men from A battery.

"Yessir," said Eadie.

"Here they are, major," the officer called to some one in the interior. "All right," he continued to the two, "wait here a minute. I'll be right out." He shortly reappeared, carrying a trench coat, and hung with a bulky map case.

"Come on," he said, and led the way out of the woods at a rapid pace.

Chapter V

SEVEN MEN TO THE YARD

BLACK, black night, mist, and cold. From the darkness came the steady, prolonged sound of marching feet, a rattle of carts, and a hoarse cry of, "Keep over, God damn it!" from time to time. Three roads intersected, and the stream of men that flowed along each of the roads merged into one with tremendous confusion, but yet continued its forward movement. There were halts at intervals, when men came to an abrupt stop by running against the men in front of them. The men cursed, officers on horseback cursed, the cry of, "Get going up there! Get on ahead!" would run down the column for miles. At last the stream would start forward again, a thousand rifles would settle as they were shifted to a new rubbing place on the shoulder, a hundred sticks would fall on as many machine gun mules, a thousand men would mutter, "Jesus Christ, how much farther we got to go?"

From this stream four men detached themselves and, going off the road a little way, came to a collection of shattered houses. In the dark the four could not see how many houses were there, whether they were in a village or a town. One of the men opened a door and lifting a blanket to one side said, "This is the place. Watch the stairs." The four went in, felt their way down a stairway, lifted another blanket and entered a large room, lighted with candles and lanterns. Here two men of the four went away and the other two looked about for a place to sit, and finding none better than the floor, sat

on that. The two that sat were Sergeant Eadie and Jake, and the two that had gone away were the artillery liaison officer and an infantry guide.

"What's this place?" asked Jake in a whisper.

"This is some kind of a P. C.," answered Eadie, "brigade or division. There are too many men in it for a regimental." The two looked about them. On all sides were tables, half a dozen telephone instruments, maps spread wide and held down by field glasses and pistols, officers everywhere, cigarette smoke in clouds, by the door a bench full of runners with red brassards, who were continually going out with messages.

"Lookit them boche!" said Jake suddenly. Eadie, with a quickening pulse, looked across the room. There were four wounded Germans there on stretchers, their muddy boots half hiding their faces from Eadie's gaze. They were all old, their hands were wasted and thin, and the uniforms faded, daubed with mud and torn.

"They probably got them in some last minute raid," said Eadie. "I told you this affair wouldn't amount to anything. How much nerve does it take to fight a bunch of grandfathers like that?"

"Well, some one's takin' a serious view of it," muttered Jake. "I never seen so many people on the road at once since the last World Series I went to." He thought of the miles of crowded roads that he and the sergeant had traversed since leaving the battery, roads jammed with trucks, with tanks, with heavy guns, with light guns, ambulances, machine gun and ammunition carts, with every kind of a military vehicle that has wheels or a caterpillar tread. The two had left the battery with the officer, had met the infantry guide, had ridden a long time in a truck, then in an empty ambulance, and had finished the journey on foot, marching with a regiment of infantry. "You might give a guy some idea of what all this liaison stuff

is about," continued Jake. "You said it was a soft job. If this is a soft job, breakin' rocks is a rest cure. I ain't walked so much since the time I got bounced off a freight in Minnesota."

"Every one has to walk in the army," said Eadie. "All that you'll have to do on this detail is look wise. The looey will have to do all the work. You see the battery fires by map, on areas that have been doped out beforehand, and it fires according to a schedule, so long on this section, so long on the next, and so on. Well, if the infantry gets held up and can't keep up with the barrage, or the barrage is too slow, or if it begins to get off the target, then the artillery liaison officer gets a call from the unit commander that he's with and it's up to said officer to fix the barrage again. He can do it by sending you or me back with the message, by firing a rocket, by showing a panel to an airplane, and if we have a wire strung, by telephoning. The best way is the rocket. The airplane goes off to fight or gets shot down, or just loses contact, wire is hard to lay and most of the time it isn't working anyway, and it takes too long to send a messenger. They have a flock of rockets with different colored balls and they get up a code before the scrap and then if the infantry want anything done to the barrage, up goes the rocket, and it's done. Maybe." Eadie began to roll a cigarette. "Jake," he continued, "you want to use Bull Durham all the time until you get into the scrap. Save your tailor-mades until then. It's not much fun trying to make a cigarette in a high wind, or in a black night, when you've got the shivers from machine gun fire, too."

"I've got some chewin'," said Jake. "Cigarettes is so much fog. I've got a half plug o' chewin' the 'Y' fellar give me, and three cigar butts. That ought to last me."

"This is a good time to fix our gas masks," said Eadie. "Let's get 'em on and tied good. We may not use 'em,

but one gas shell is enough to put a guy away and it's only a fool that takes a chance on gas. One trip out to hospital for gas is enough."

"What are they keepin' them jerries hangin' around for?" asked Jake. "Is this a P. C. an' a hospital both?"

"They brought them in to question them," said Eadie. "And I suppose the traffic is so thick they can't get an ambulance up to get them out. Here comes our looey."

"Put your gas masks on," said the lieutenant, kneeling beside Eadie. "Alert position, we're going up to the jump-off right away. Now, then, they've given me two rocket codes, so you can have one. There's four of each type of rocket. I'll keep two and give you each one set apiece. We've got a new model pistol to shoot them off with. This division we're going with is a silk hat outfit, they've got all the latest stuff—Browning machine guns and auto rifles, Tissot gas masks, new model helmets, all the latest wrinkles." The officer folded up a map that he had in his hand and fitted it into his pocket. Eadie took his gas mask from the carrier and applied a little of the anti-fog preparation to each eye-piece. He put on the mask, saw that it was in working order, and then put it carefully back in the carrier again. He and Jake assisted each other to put their masks in the alert position. The mask was habitually carried slung on a long web strap from the right shoulder. When in an area where gas might be expected, a simple hooking up of the web on one side brought the gas mask on the chest, suspended by the shortened carrying strap from the neck. A cord went behind the back to keep the mask from swinging and it was the custom of the men to pass this cord through the carrying strap, pulling the strap down the back, and thus removing the weight of it from the neck.

Another officer came hurrying out of the fog of cigarette smoke. "Ready?" he asked.

"Whenever you are," answered the artillery officer. "Come on."

The four of them went up the stairs and, waiting at the top until there was a break in the traffic, crossed the road and followed the guide among the ruined houses.

"That's another division there," said the guide, indicating the marching troops. "Our battalion is the flank battalion of the division. Our troops are more to the west and we're going another way, where there aren't so many men walking up your back."

"You scared, Eadie?" whispered Jake.

"Scared hell," replied Eadie. "The worst we'll get out of this will be the loss of a night's sleep. I was scared to death at Saint Mihiel. No kiddin', Jake, I lost ten years off the end of my life that night. When a man really gets a bayonet through him that's the end, but when he just thinks about getting one through him he suffers. Man, I died every kind of a death. By God, I was so scared I could feel the blood running out of wounds I didn't have. I've got too strong an imagination to be a good soldier anyway. Well, when we started out to the attack I didn't see a single man get hit. You remember what a dud that drive was. This one will be the same. I'm no more scared than I would be on a practice march in the training camp. I've got two worries—where we're going to sleep to-night, and whether we get relieved to-morrow night in time to get a hot supper."

They passed a long line of machine gunners taking their weapons from the carts and preparing to go forward with them on their shoulders. A steep muddy slope rose before them, up which they climbed with considerable difficulty. Down again into a valley, another ruined town, and then up again, like the cars of a scenic railway. At the top of this second hill they paused to catch their breaths.

"This is us," said Eadie.

"I had a hunch it was," replied Jake. In the middle distance, and not so far away either, was the familiar line of lights that marked the enemy trenches. The condition of the terrain between, the men could not see. Stray shells crumped and coughed and from time to time Eadie could hear the sharp bark of a seventy-five from somewhere over the hill behind him. Just such a night as the one before Saint Mihiel. He felt his scalp tingle and his heart beat a bit faster, but he fought against any feeling of excitement.

"I'm never going to be scared again," he muttered.

"Shshshsh!" cautioned the guide. "Here's where we go in."

He led the way into a narrow trench, and following a telephone wire, pausing now and then to read a sign that was set in the trench wall, he arrived finally at a dugout. "This is the temporary P. C.," whispered the guide to the liaison officer. "There's only room in there for two, the major and the adjutant. The rest of the officers are around the next traverse and the men are about eight or ten yards farther on in the old fire trench. We'll go in and report."

"Where will you two be when I want you?" the officer asked Eadie.

"We'll want to find a place to sleep, sir," answered Eadie. "We can't sleep here and have people walking all over us all night."

"Why don't you go up with the men?" asked the infantry officer.

"Good," said Eadie. "We'll come back here in the morning."

"Now don't get lost," admonished the liaison officer. "We'll want you badly to-morrow. This is going to be

a serious matter when it starts. What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing, sir," said Eadie, the darkness hiding the fact that he was still grinning.

"These birds give me a pain," continued Eadie, as he and Jake went forward to find the fire trench where the infantry were. "They keep saying, 'Oh, this is going to be a tough fight! Oh, this is going to be a go-getter of a battle! Have you got a first aid packet? Have you got plenty of pistol ammunition? Good-by, brave boy, if death should part us.' You'd think they were trying to scare us. Well, I won't be scared."

They turned a traverse and found themselves in a broader trench. The glow of a distant flare showed that it was full of men, but Eadie's sense of hearing had told him that some seconds before. These men talked to each other, they got up and sat down again, their equipment rattled, and all the time they talked, swore, whistled and some even sang.

"Jake," said Eadie, "it's time you were getting training in observation. The good liaison man notes down the regimental numbers of all troops he sees, the road they are on, and what he can tell about their condition, whether they are tired, appear to have lost much equipment, are fresh troops going in to relieve, and so forth. Now here are some troops you can't see. They're making a lot of noise and moving around too much. What does all this talking and singing mean to you?"

Jake smacked his lips. "It's my guess they got liquor among 'em," said he. "Let's ask 'em for a drink!"

"Oh, God!" moaned Eadie. "Pry your mind loose from booze for a second, will you? All this racket means that this is a green outfit. I don't know who they are, or where they came from, but they don't know anything

about war. Their stunt is to get some sleep and not make so much noise. Did you see the packs they had on when that light was up? Complete, spare shoes and all."

"I could do with a good jolt of white mule," muttered Jake dreamily.

"Give us a hand up on this parapet," replied Eadie with disgust. "I'm going to do some bunk police."

"On the parapet?" gasped Jake.

"Sure," said Eadie. "It's quiet there. I can lie on the sandbags and keep out of the mud."

"The boche?" asked Jake with horror in his tones.

"The boche hell!" replied Eadie. "The boche went home to mama an hour ago. I'm going up." He clambered to the parapet, put on his overcoat, and his slicker over it, and lay down on the sandbags. "Come up, Jake?" he invited, leaning his head into the trench.

"No," said Jake, "I'm comfortable. I ain't hungerin' t' git killed before my time. I'll wait till morning before I go over any top."

Eadie endeavored to sleep. The last time he had waited the word to go forward he had had no trouble wooing slumber, but this time he could not seem to compose his mind. The men in the trench made too much noise. He could hear more troops arriving by way of communication trenches to the right and left. The bombardment started, and this time he could hear the shell exploding on the German positions. The ground trembled under him as though continuous heavy traffic were passing close at hand.

"Be yourself," muttered Eadie. "You made a fool of yourself the last time. This is liable to be a bigger farce than the other."

The infantry quieted down after a time and Eadie managed to get some sleep. Only in snatches, however, for he was awakened by the burst of a shell close at hand,

and when the effect of that had worn off the sound of the detail cutting wire disturbed him. They were engineers, severing the last few strands before the trenches, so that the infantry would have a clear path. Eadie, sitting up to see if he could see the wire cutters, noticed that the black color of the night was fading. He could see the opposite wall of the trench, and the line of rotting sandbags on the parapet for quite a distance.

"Daylight!" thought Eadie. Almost immediately he heard the voices of the officers in the trench arousing the men. He climbed down into the communication trench, settled his helmet, and adjusted his gas mask. He wondered if it were light enough to have a look at his rocket code, and decided not. The artillery liaison officer came out of the shallow dugout, followed by two men in trench coats who must be the major and adjutant.

Pow! Bong! A long rattling rumble, like the crackling of nearby thunder. The barrage had started.

"Ten minutes and then for it," said the major calmly. Eadie looked at him. The major's face was cold and impassive, but there had been a tiny cracked note in his voice, a slight humming of his words that meant nervousness. The major's face was round and full and there were no lines on it that come from fighting battles, whether in business or in war.

"How's your courage, Jake?" grinned Eadie. "Don't get your tail down. This waiting is the worst part of it. I invite you to a drink in the first jerry canteen we come to. Have a tailor-made?"

Jake replied obscenely. He removed his helmet and, selecting a cigar butt from the net in its interior, he put it in his cheek.

There was a wailing of whistles that would have done credit to a flock of gulls. The sound was ear-splitting. Shouts, cheers, wild yells. "Here we go," said the major.

putting his watch into his pocket. He led the way along the communication trench, up steps out in the parapet of the fire trench, and so out into the field. There was a thick fog and Eadie could see nothing but a squad column starting off to the right and one lone infantryman who had his feet tangled in some kind of white streamers like tape, trying to kick himself loose.

The noise was terrific. The fog prevented one from knowing where this noise was coming from. A steady roar of machine guns, like the sound of a waterfall, might very well be the Americans firing a machine gun barrage. The advance began to go sharply downhill. The going was extremely heavy. The ground had been pounded and pounded and there was not a place where a man could put his foot that was not a shell hole or the edge of one. The fighting for Dead Man's Hill in 1917 and 1918 had used this sector roughly.

"You see!" yelled Eadie, seizing Jake's shoulder and shouting in his ear. "No casualties! What did I tell you?"

"I see," said Jake. "I'm scared. I ain't used to this like you are."

"Huh, huh," laughed Eadie, "you tell me, kid."

His laugh, however, was a bit hollow. He was ashamed of himself that he had to fight back, that the way he did. Reason with himself as he would, that he had been all through this before, that the Germans were licked and had taken to their heels hours ago, and that this attack was but slightly more dangerous than the bayonet charges on bundles of faggots in the old training camp days, Eadie was afraid. The noise terrified him. A man's nerves are not constructed to stand the strain of the continual shock of high powered explosions, any more than his body is made to stand continual immersion in water. And aside from the physical strain of the ex-

plosions, there is the mental reaction, too. Steel buzzes about. A man can hear Death rustling his wings overhead.

The advance went steadily downhill, making progress in spite of the rough nature of the ground. The major, just in front of Eadie, had a compass in his hand and besides the artillery liaison officer he had an engineer officer, also with a compass. What the other half dozen officers were Eadie did not know. There were too many of them. Moreover, they were going, all in a mob, faster than the infantry men about them, so that the staff found itself very soon among the autoriflemen of the first wave. Possibly the major had done it purposely, to be sure his company commanders were going in the right direction. The fog and the smoke shut out everything; Eadie could only see the rolling, pitching ground, for all the world like a rough sea, except that it was stationary—the corkscrew ends of German wire posts sticking up here and there, rusty, broken wire, and men going up and down, in and out of the shell holes, and straddling wide-legged over tangles of wire.

They began to go forward on level ground and Eadie noticed the blackened trunks of long dead trees, shattered and torn into stumps about the height of a man. His feet began to sink into the mud. There was a swamp here and the men kept getting deeper and deeper into it. Eadie looked at the major, to see if they had lost their direction, but the major, beyond a glance or two at his map, did not seem disturbed. Eadie waded in the swamp to his knees. This was disagreeable going, he thought, but it would soon be over. The worst part was this marching in the smoke and fog; once the sun came out and a man could see where he was at, things would look more cheerful. He had not yet seen a casualty.

The sergeant became suddenly conscious of a new note

in the turmoil of noise, a new note such as one hears in a symphony, when a brass begins to play among the wood instruments. It was faint, but as Eadie listened it began to swell, as though the unseen orchestra leader swung his baton in one long sweeping motion.

Crescendo! A stern metallic note in the storm that drowned all others. The rush of a torrent over rocks, the cracking of thousands of bullets overhead, that soft phit! phit! phit! for all the world like a dancer's toes on the boards of a stage, that a bullet makes going into a man. The boche! The boche had opened fire.

Five seconds of that rain of steel convinced Eadie that he had been mistaken. This was going to be a FIGHT. To his horror he saw that the advance, instead of taking to earth immediately, was still going forward. Men were dropping everywhere, some going down suddenly with a crash of equipment, others swaying like wounded animals, then sinking slowly to their knees, and so to the ground. The slightly wounded, frightened by the pain of a bullet just under the skin, a finger shot off, or a "crease," cried out loudly. There was a clamor for "First Aid" that could be heard above the machine guns. Eadie closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the men falling, but he fell himself, headlong into an old shell hole, and bruised himself badly on the sharp stones there. A hand seized his shoulder.

"Where yuh hit, sergeant?" Jake's homely red face, a little whiter than usual and the eyes wide open with concern, was thrust into Eadie's.

"I'm not hit," said Eadie, getting up. "I just fell down. Watch yourself, never mind me."

"You was sayin' somethin' about this bein' a Sunday School picnic last night," said Jake, fingering his gas mask. "We ain't gone to the wrong church or anything like that, have we?"

"It may not last," replied Eadie.

"It looks as though it would last a hell of a lot longer than we will," muttered Jake. They heard the shriek of a shell and flung themselves down. The shell struck very near, Eadie could swear he heard it worming its way into the earth—it burst—BLAM!

"First aid! First aid!"

"Jesus!" muttered Eadie. He remembered a time when he did not swear, but that was before his first battle.

The advance continued; blindly, drunkenly, it reeled through the fog. More shells, more machine guns, bullets splashed water into Eadie's face. Was there another of those damned swamps? Eadie looked down. There were a lot of packs scattered here, a few dead, and men with white brassards frantically binding up the wounded. This outfit had gone quite a way, thought Eadie, before they had ditched their packs. And those first aid men certainly had guts to be so far forward. He sank to his knees in a sort of mire and was forced to seize one of the blackened tree stumps to pull himself out again. A column of men with stove pipes went by, going across the front of the advance. The stove pipes were in reality Stokes mortars, and this mortar company must be lost. After them came men with telephone wire.

"What the hell is all this?" cried Eadie. Stokes mortar detachments usually are the last of all in an advance, and telephone details are far behind the first wave. And these men were going right across the path of the advancing first wave.

"Hey!" cried Eadie, splashing over and seizing the sleeve of the artillery officer, "we're going the wrong way. We're running into the back of some other outfit! See all these packs and that gang of men going across our front? That's the last wave of an advance!"

"I know it," said the officer. "I told the major some time ago. His compass is off or he's lost his nerve. The engineer officer was killed. It's none of our business, thank God!"

Eadie's battalion continued to flounder through the mud and in a minute or two it was definitely involved in the mass of troops that seemed to be crossing its front. When that happened there was no longer any doubt in any one's mind but that the battalion had lost its direction. It had collided with troops of another division and the smoke, the fog, and the confusing effect of continually lying down and getting up to avoid shell bursts was now trebled by the fact that men were going every which way. There was tumult.

"Here, where the hell are you men going?" cried an irate officer. "What organization is this? This isn't your sector, get the hell out of here!" Men could be heard raging everywhere.

"You ninety day wonder!" bellowed another officer, "haven't you got brains enough to know that this brook runs east and west? What do you want to go east along it for? Get your men out of here or I'll have mine fire on you."

"Steady!" called some one. A knot of men, all fluttering maps, came splashing through the mire. At their head, still wearing his overseas cap with one silver star, walked a tall elderly man. "You've lost your direction, major," he said. "Do you know where you are?" He waved his hand in a signal to withdraw to the two irate officers that had first appeared and began to explain to Eadie's major how the mistake might have been made, and how it should be rectified. Eadie, sitting down on a stump, watched the other division going by.

"I'll say we're off our track," he muttered. "That bird is a brigade commander. Those men going by are en-

gineers or pioneer infantry, hence pick and shovel and ladders to bridge trenches with."

More men passed, signal corps men, telephone linesmen, stretcher bearers, a Catholic chaplain with a stole about his neck, asking the wounded on the ground if they had need of him. Eadie remembered that he had not seen a man hit for some time. The battalion must be sheltered from the enemy fire. He could hear shells falling, but they were not close at hand.

"Come," yelled Jake, who had all this time chewed silently on his cigar end, "it's time we moved. The boss is goin' back the way he come." The major's staff began to scatter, hunting for the commanders of the companies to tell them that the battalion must change direction. The major, meanwhile, waving his arm to such men as were still in sight, turned and began to move back the way he had come, paralleling the swamp. Again clamor arose. It is a difficult job to separate two units that have collided and become involved with each other. The officers and non-coms of each tried to find their own men, but it was well-nigh impossible. One thing that saved the situation was that the troops of one division were all infantry, while those of the other were mostly auxiliary troops, following up the attack. And then again, numbers of the men of Eadie's division, realizing that they had come into a part of the battlefield that was relatively calm, had not a great desire to leave it.

"Get your rockets handy," said the liaison officer to Eadie. "We'll maybe want to have a fresh barrage. The barrage was to hold on the hostile intermediate position for thirty minutes. If we get along fast, we'll just about catch up with it. The support battalion was supposed to leapfrog us there, but whether they will or not now I don't know. Do you know where you are?"

"No, sir," said Eadie, "I never saw a map of the sector."

"Well, I can't tell you," said the officer, "because I don't know either. Let it ride until the fog lifts. It's getting lighter anyway, and then we can find out where we are."

"Have we passed the boche front line yet?" asked Jake.

"I guess not," said the officer. "I haven't seen any prisoners."

They climbed uphill again, panting. The country here resembled a sheet of elephant iron, all hollows and ridges. The slopes were slippery with wet clay and the shell holes so thick that the men had to wind their way single file among them. Some of them fell in, overbalanced by the weight of a machine gun or a coil of wire on their shoulders. The enemy left them alone, either because all the defenders of the sector had been killed or because they had retreated to a place more suited for defense further on. The fog and smoke hindered the advance, but it also hindered the enemy's observation, so that he would have no idea of where the Americans were. The battalion came out on the top of the hill and Eadie noticed that the fog was getting thinner. He could see for quite a distance now, in front, where the ground sloped away again, and on each flank, where shadowy figures with slung rifles kept coming over the hill.

"Jump out and tell those company commanders to hold up a minute or two," ordered the major. "Tell them we'll have a five-minute halt so that they can get their outfits reorganized. Then come back to me and report the companies' location. If this fog lets up, as I think it will, we can get somewhere."

The enlisted members of the staff went away at a trot. They were company runners and each went to find his own captain, like homing pigeons to their loft. Eadie discovered that he could see his own shadow.

"Hi, Jake," he called, "here comes the sun. Didn't I tell you? When the sun comes out we'll all feel better. We can see the scenery, and things will be a little warmer."

"I'll say they will," muttered Jake. "These here boche ain't fixin' to let us come into their back yard an' go breakin' their windows without lettin' fly a little rock salt at us. I ain't had much to do with krauts in France, but I've had some truck with 'em in Wisconsin an' they're bad Indians. The time to start runnin' is when you don't see any one in the apple orchard."

The runners had not come back before the sun was out in full force. The major expressed his satisfaction and, opening a map, began to check off the prominent points on the landscape. The ground went slightly down in front and then a plateau sloped up to the white skeleton of a town. Beyond this town was a hill, a sharply outlined knob, that shut off all view in that direction. To the left were woods, and a crooked valley, in which occasional shells burst, sending up a cloud of smoke like steam from a locomotive. Eadie decided that these were American shells, since he could see the flash, and the smoke would have already begun to drift away before the faint slam of the explosion was audible.

The runners came back, an officer from one of the companies with them. They reported to the major and he seemed very satisfied.

"Not so bad," he remarked to the staff, "even if we did get a little bit off the track; we got back on right away. And we're all right, the companies aren't lost or gummed up. Well, time to be going." He blew his whistle and a number of other men blew theirs. The officers of the companies in front could be heard urging the men forward. A few stood up. The urgings became more insistent.

"Come on!" roared the major, "get going there! Move out!"

The few men moved forward a little and others hesitatingly followed. Some jumped from one shell hole to another, and turned about to see who was behind them.

"I don't blame them guys," remarked Jake in a whisper, "that bird got us lost once. I got my doubts o' follerin' him myself."

More infantry, seeing that the first men to stand up had not been killed, stood up in their turn and, urged with boot and voice by their officers, began to cross the plateau toward the town. More and more of them came out of their holes and Eadie, looking around, saw that there was a very respectable wave of infantry climbing the slope. They advanced steadily, although the line was rather ragged now.

Tac-tac-tac-tac! One gun opened on the advance. Some men dropped. Eadie did not look, but he could hear the calls for first aid.

Tac-tac-tac-tac-tac! A friend had joined the first gun, two or three friends, in fact. The advance wavered a bit.

"They're in the town!" cried the major. "Forward! Rush that town!" Other officers shouted indistinct commands.

TAC-TAC-TAC-TAC! A clattering roar, a deafening clamor. The infantry knew enough to lie down now, and did so. Every one went for the nearest hole, and since there were plenty of them, a man had but to drop in his tracks and he was protected. A gust of bullets swept into the staff; the artillery officer went down, a runner cried out, and Eadie made a leap for a deep hole, into which he plunged. He lay there for a full minute, listening to the shouting, to the hacking of the guns, and

a sharp barking sound, that must be grenades bursting. How bad was this going to be? A cautious look over the edge of the shell hole showed him the town, white smoke from grenades near it, the men of the foremost wave in shell holes above him, and some others who were trying to advance by crawling.

Phwit! A dimple suddenly appeared in the ground before Eadie's eyes and a few grains of dirt trickled out. Eadie promptly sought the bottom of the hole. A whole handful of bullets landed in the place where his head had just been and covered him with dirt.

Zinnnnnnng! went a ricochet.

"By God!" cried Eadie. He very gently removed his helmet and shoved it out of the rear rim of the hole. It came sailing back to him with two long creases on the side and a hole through the top. The sergeant felt again that icy hand about his heart that he had felt so many times before in battle. But this time it seemed to be a stronger, colder hand. The bullets in the edge of the hole, the ricochet, and lastly the return of the steel helmet pointed to but one conclusion. The battalion was being shot up from the rear.

Who would have thought it, that a battalion advancing so slowly as this one had would leave enemy machine gunners behind it! How was such a thing possible? Ah! But the major had gone astray, one company and a platoon of another had followed him, and the other companies finding themselves out of touch with their flank units, had taken to ground and waited for the major to show up. The major had first gone east, and then returned to the plateau diagonally, and having but a platoon or so left out of the men that had first become mixed with the other division, he had not covered the sector very thoroughly. Each division, afraid of again colliding with

the other, had drawn away, leaving a wide gap between the two, and from this gap machine gunners now made merry with the Americans.

There was a sudden burst of shouting and the banging of grenades from the left front, in the direction of the town.

"Stand by for a counter attack!" cried some one. A hundred voices took up the warning.

A counter attack! This battalion, its nerve already shaken, its confidence already lost in its officers, scattered and disorganized in shell holes, was now to receive a counter attack. The Germans always timed them well, just at the moment when the enemy's courage was the weakest, just at the instant when the men were of two minds, whether to stay or run. Then the Germans would send over five or six hundred or a thousand men in a dense mass, like a football team bucking the line, and this mass would make up the men's minds for them.

A counter attack! More shouting, more grenades! Eadie unbuttoned his holster and drew his pistol. How come? Was he hit? His hand came away from the butt wet and sticky. Blood? *Cosmolene!*

"Well, I'm damned!" said Eadie. Here he was in a shell hole in the midst of a red hot fight, a counter attack under way and his pistol still in the cosmolene in which it had been issued. Cosmolene is thick, heavy grease, the weapon was full of it, the barrel was packed with it, and even if he could get the firing mechanism to function, the gun would jam at the first shot if it did not burst. Well, he had his choice of cleaning it then and there with such materials as he had or of holding up his hands to the first boche that came along.

The exterior grease he removed to a great extent by wiping the gun on his puttees. He tore a strip from his handkerchief and, taking a pencil from his musette, pre-

pared to clean the barrel. His hands shook like leaves and his teeth rattled so that he several times bit his tongue. He dared not listen to see how the attack progressed. The machine gun fire still continued and made his labors all the more difficult, curled in a ball as he was at the bottom of the hole. The barrel of the automatic is removed by dismounting the slide. There is a little button just under the muzzle which is pressed and this allows a locking cam to be turned, so that the barrel and slide can be removed. Eadie pressed this button down and turned the cam. Now under the button is a strong spring that returns the slide to its normal position after it has recoiled from the shock of the cartridge being fired, and in Eadie's nervous state he neglected to exert enough pressure on this spring, so that once the cam was turned and the button was free, the spring leaped under Eadie's astonished finger and went soaring out of the shell hole.

"Fineesh!" said Eadie. He hurled the rest of the pistol after the spring. Then followed a bitter moment for the sergeant. He had drawn that gun in the replacement camp and had left it in cosmolene because he had been too lazy to clean it. The night before the drive at Saint Mihiel he had had no time and since then he had not given the weapon a thought. It was heavy, it was always banging his hip sore, and what time in camp it was not dangling from the spare pole of the fourgon, it was tucked away under a tarpaulin on the caisson lid. And now, of course, just when he needed it badly, it was impossible to use it. A court-martial composed of twelve Sergeant Eadies trying Sergeant Eadie for neglect of duty at that minute would have given a sentence of death by slow torture. Fool! A non-commissioned officer and he didn't know enough to keep his pistol clean. And furthermore he didn't know how to clean it when he had the opportunity. He was a damned fool to carry an auto-

matic that was full of springs and things. If he got out of this alive, a revolver for him. A revolver or a rifle. Ah! There was a thought. There must be some dead doughboy around whose rifle was still in working order. It would be dangerous to start crawling around hunting said rifle, but it would be just as dangerous to stay in the hole. When this counter attack arrived he would have to hold up his hands and the boche might be near-sighted and not see that he had surrendered. The ground would be lumpy anyway and he would only have to crawl from one shell hole to the next. At that he leaped out of his hole and dived into another a few feet away. Empty. He went on to the next, dragging himself on his stomach.

The sun now shone brightly. There was a wind, a cold and bitter one. Eadie could feel it in those moments when he was going from one hole to the other. There was always one agonizing moment, when his head and shoulders were in a shell hole and the rest of him still above ground where the bullets could get him. Eadie was of slight build, but he had never before realized what tremendous hips he had. They seemed to be mountainous, he could feel them sticking up into the sky, a perfect target for even the blindest gunner.

Eadie explored five holes without success. He found neither men nor weapons. He heard voices in the sixth and went in joyously. There were two men in it, the major and Jake.

"Good!" cried the major at sight of Eadie, "you're the artillery sergeant, aren't you? I want a barrage! Can you get me a barrage?"

"The lieutenant——" began Eadie.

"The lieutenant's dead!" barked the major. "I've got his rocket pistol and this man here has got rockets, but we haven't any code. Have you got a code? Your lieu-

tenant had one but it's all torn to bits by bullets and full of blood and I can't read it. Listen. Tell the artillery I want a barrage on that town. I want it for fifteen minutes, then I want it to start at the north edge of the town and go slowly across the fields north. The support battalion will take care of these gunners in back of us, I hope. Tell 'em that. Tell 'em to start the barrage at once! We're held up here too long. Tell 'em to use plenty of gas, too. Lots of high explosive. Tell the heavies to fire, too. Got that? Well, do it."

"Oh, God!" cried Eadie, "you can't send any message like that with a rocket! The only way to get detailed fire like that is to send a man back."

"Why, can't you see we haven't got time to send a man back?" cried the major angrily. "Do you think you could get through those gunners that are shooting us up from behind? Do you realize that we're being held up here for a hell of a long time? And what will we do while you're going three or four kilometers back to your battery? Sit here and bite our thumbs? Shoot off some rockets, quick!"

Eadie began to do some rapid thinking. A rocket requesting a barrage soaring up from somewhere in the scenery would mean little to artillery observers. In trench warfare a barrage rocket means a very definite thing; the artillery know beforehand just where to fire, but in an attack a request for a barrage would mean nothing. If the observers saw the rocket and even if they could see where it came from, they would not know where the barrage was to be laid. The chances were that they would lay the barrage on the necks of the troops that had requested it. As for the rolling barrage that was to precede the troops, that had undoubtedly gone rolling its majestic way onward and was now shelling positions a kilometer or so away. This barrage could be held,

shifted, shortened or lengthened by rocket signals, but that would not do the battalion in the shell holes any good.

"Come, come, for the love of Christ," yelled the major. "Here's the pistol. Stick a rocket in it and shoot it Have you got rockets? Here you, give him yours!"

Jake obediently handed a fistful of rockets to Eadie, and the sergeant, drawing his code from his pocket, consulted it. He looked at the code, pursed his lips, and inspected the bottom of the rocket cartridges. They were of different colors, about the size and appearance of shotgun shells and on the bottom of each was marked what kind of a rocket it was, whether of three red stars, two green stars, a yellow smoke, or what.

"Give me that!" cried the major, snatching the code book from Eadie's hand. "What the hell good you are, I don't know! Sit there thumbing a book while my battalion melts away like snow!" The major opened the book, and on the first page, which could be easily torn out and destroyed, was a code.

"Lengthen barrage, three green stars. Shorten barrage, one red star. More gas, string of white stars. Less gas, string of red stars."

"Why, this is no damned good!" cried the major. He hurled the book into the bottom of the shell hole. "What's it say on those cartridges?" he demanded.

"The color of the outside tells you the color of the rocket," explained Eadie, "and those little holes on the bottom tell you the number of stars. The letter means the color, too. R for red and so on. That one with a big R is a red smoke."

"Here!" cried the major, "shoot 'em all off! We ought to get some kind of action out of it. Shoot 'em off or throw 'em away, I don't care which."

"Boy, I've got it!" cried Eadie. "We must have a contact plane here somewhere. I'll fire six white stars;

that calls the plane over us. Then if we show laundry, he'll see that this is our front line and if he's got any brains at all he'll fly back or wireless back that we're held up here."

"Shoot it!" cried the major. Eadie thereupon fired the rocket. There was a plane in sight about half a mile away, that was dipping and circling at a low altitude and Eadie's heart was considerably lightened to see this plane straighten out and come in their direction.

"Get out a handkerchief, Jake," cried Eadie. "Have the men wave their shirts, handkerchiefs, anything white, so the guy in the plane can see our front line. I don't know whether there's a panel code or not. I haven't got a copy if there is."

"Wave your handkerchiefs, men," roared the major. "Wave your handkerchiefs so the plane can see where we are."

The booming of the plane's motor was now plainly audible. It had gained altitude a little and as it arrived overhead, the aviator cut off his motor and glided swiftly down toward the infantry. Eadie looked up at a long dark green shape, a belly that reminded him of a darting fish. Many voices shouted, rifles popped, then all was drowned in a crackle of a machine gun. This plane bore beneath each wing a thin cross. It banked around, streamers flying from its rudder, and a long one of empty machine gun belt from its belly. Again its gun crackled and three bombs that it had dropped burst in clouds of dirty smoke. The machine was a boche.

There is nothing quite so demoralizing as attack from the air. The very novelty of the method of fighting is unnerving enough, but the helpless feeling that there is no protection from overhead attack is the worst part. Men cover their heads with their arms, they crawl under blankets and shelter halves, hold machine gun ammuni-

tion cases over their heads. As for these particular troops, wild panic at once took possession of them. Most of them remembered that a little way in front of them was a town and a town meant cellars. Many got up and rushed blindly for the town. Others turned on their backs and fired their rifles at the plane. Every one yelled. The plane continued to fire, other enemy machine guns joined in, but those infantrymen could not be stopped. Their fear of the plane was greater than anything else. Enemy machine gunners, judging the moment propitious for surrender, stood up with hands in air. They were either ignored or ruthlessly bayoneted. The major raved ceaselessly.

"Hey!" yelled Jake, seizing the major's arm, "the gang are in the town. Let's beat it for them houses!"

"What gang, you red-headed idiot?"

"Our gang!"

Eadie and the major peered over the edge of the shell hole. It was true. Figures in olive drab could be seen diving into the ruined houses. This collection of broken walls had loomed as a refuge, and the whole battalion had converged on it in a mad headlong charge. The major turned about and emptied his pistol at the plane overhead. "Come on!" cried the major. He and the other two leaped out of the shell hole.

Thuck!

"Some one's hit!" shouted Eadie.

"It ain't me!" replied Jake. The major stumbled on a step or two and collapsed.

"Into a hole with him, Jake!" cried Eadie. Each seized an arm and dragged the major into a hole. One look told them that their aid would be unavailing. The major had been shot through the gas mask and the bullet evidently traversing the heart, had torn away most of the major's left side on its way out.

"Let's get outta here, sergeant!" Jake had already stretched out one leg to leave the shell hole.

"Just a minute," replied Eadie. "Never get excited in the face of danger." He turned the major on one side, lifted off his field glass case and the glasses themselves from around the major's neck, then he jumped out of the hole and picked up the major's pistol. "Come on, Jake, us for the town." His gas mask suddenly unhooked and dangled from his chest. Eadie tried to hook it up again and discovered that the carrying strap had been cut through and that the mask was only held to him by the string about his shoulders.

Eadie galloped toward the town, but his feet seemed burdened with lead. The hobnailed shoes were too heavy for a soldier, he thought. Ahead of him Jake seemed to fly and was already outdistancing the sergeant. They leaped in and out of holes, hurdled dead and wounded, and so arrived at the first houses of the town. The first cellar was full and the men overflowed up the stairs that led into it, a pushing, yelling crowd. The second stairway was also filled and so were the third and fourth. Jake, whooping like an Indian, continued down the street, firing his revolver. A group of men clustered about a cellar entrance scattered and Jake went to earth in that black burrow like a rabbit. Yells and faint shouts came from below ground. The shadow of the plane fell on the street, and every one took to cover at once.

Eadie leaped a pile of débris and dived through a doorway. He found himself in the living-room of a shattered house. A stairway led up in the corner, but above was nothing but naked beams and broken rotting boards. There was a machine gun in one corner, but its crew had disappeared. What next, thought Eadie. His first care was to load the pistol he had taken from the major. Bullets were cracking overhead and smacking against the

house walls. A counter attack had started from this town not so long ago. What had become of it? Men yelled, and the shadow of the plane slid up and down the street, like a shark's on sandy bottom. There were two of those planes now and they showed no signs of leaving. Eadie wondered if they would ever run out of ammunition He examined the machine gun. At first look it appeared intact, but a closer examination revealed the fact that the water jacket had been punctured. Eadie peeked through the hole in the wall through which the gun would have fired. All he could see was fields, torn and mangled by the bombardment, rolling hills, and little patches of forest in the far distance. All the landscape was covered with bursting shells, in the sky mysterious planes passed and repassed at terrific speed, or circled above sections of the battlefields like hawks. He crossed the room and, crawling under some tumbled beams, looked out a window on the other side of the house that commanded a view of the street. It was just a bare stretch of road, lined with piles of stone and rubbish. He could see, here and there, the black entrance of a cellar, with beams or railroad iron sticking out, showing that the floor over the cellar was well reinforced as a protection against shell fire. Probably those cellars were full of the enemy.

The town was quiet. Somewhere in the eastward there was a steady clatter of fire, but in the town itself all was still. A man could hear all the better the vicious whack of snipers' bullets against the walls of the houses, and the cracking of bullets overhead. The battalion had taken to earth in the cellars of the southern part of the town and the town had now two masters, the Americans to the south and the Germans to the north. One would have to drive the other out, and Eadie, thinking of the disorganization he had seen, the losses that the battalion had already undergone, and the fact that the major had been

killed and the staff scattered, began to fear that it would be the Americans that would be driven out. Another counter attack would do it.

Whack! went a bullet and dust flew from the stones above Eadie's head. He backed hurriedly into the center of the room and then took refuge in the fireplace. Another bullet zipped through the hole, ricocheted from the breach of the machine gun, and went humming out through the roof, zeeeeeee!

"Now, then," muttered Eadie, "if I stick around in here alone I'll get the shivers again. As long as I'm doing something, I don't mind."

Again the shadows went by overhead. A gun rattled faintly. Prrrrit! went a burst in the road in front of the house and a cloud of dust arose. Eadie backed into the fireplace. Ah, but they could shoot down the chimney at him! He started to back out again.

"Hey, Eadie," cried a faint voice from the street. "Hey, sergeant, where yuh at?"

"In here," yelled Eadie, "in the house." It was Jake's voice, and Eadie thought after he had replied that the boche could hear him as well as Jake, and he might get a grenade lobbed at him. Again he ducked into the fireplace.

"Sergeant," said Jake's rough voice close at hand, "where yuh at? Give us a look a minute."

Eadie stuck his head around the corner of the hearth. Jake, leaning in through the window, was looking around in search of him. "Oh, there you are," said Jake, seeing him. "Say, come out here a minute. I got some prisoners here I took. What'll I do with them?" Behind Jake Eadie could see seven or eight Germans standing patiently in the street, overcoats and blankets over their arms, and bundles of clothing, pipes, and accordions in their hands. They looked like immigrants with a guide.

"For Christ's sake, come in out of that street," gasped Eadie.

"What'll I do with these prisoners?" demanded Jake indignantly. "I captured 'em myself. They fought like wildcoats, I ain't kiddin'!"

"Oh, God!" moaned Eadie, "and I asked to have you go with me! Give 'em a damn good kick and start 'em down the road. Come in here out of the wet! You'll get killed!"

The prisoners themselves, for all their mild patient looks, kept casting an apprehensive eye up at the sky, or looking over their shoulders in seeming anxiety.

"To hell with 'em," cried Eadie. "Turn 'em loose and come in here! We're due for a counter attack any minute!"

Jake looked doubtfully at the prisoners and then instinctively ducked as a bullet cracked overhead.

"Counter attack, huh?" repeated Jake. He threw one leg over the sill.

"Nein, no," spoke one of the prisoners, a sad-eyed, fatherly sort of man, "alles gone." He waved a finger back and forth in front of his face. "Kaput!" he said.

"Yah! Yah!" agreed the others. One turned and waved his hand in a sort of farewell gesture toward the northern hills.

"I know what that means," said Jake, "an' I ain't no German neither. That means their gang has all pulled out."

Something cracked at the upper end of the street and Jake hastily stepped over the pile of rubbish and beckoned his prisoners to follow him into the house. They came in fearfully and huddled in the center of the room, clutching their bundles. Jake pulled and pushed them into a line and surveyed them thoughtfully. They were old, all were gray-haired, and two wore spectacles. They shuffled their

feet and looked at the ground, at the criss-cross of beams over their heads, anywhere but at Jake or Eadie.

"I took 'em alive!" said Jake with pride. "You wouldn't think it to look at 'em what a scrap they put up."

Eadie replied with a hoarse laugh. Jake, however, paid no attention but walked around and around his squad, and finally took his position in front of them. The prisoners, expecting some sort of command, stiffened their backs and stopped shuffling their feet.

"Now, then," said Jake, "who's got any chewin' tobacco among yuh?"

Receiving no reply, he turned to Eadie. "Sergeant," said he, "if you knew how much you sounded like a jughead brayin' away up that chimney you wouldn't laugh so hard."

"Ah, Jake!" gasped Eadie, "you'll be my death."

"Well," said Jake, turning about with his hands on his hips, "what do we do now?"

"Not much," replied the sergeant. "You and I are artillerymen. These doughboys have the work to do. Let 'em do it. While these planes buzz around overhead we'll guard the prisoners. I thought we might set up that gun in the corner and take a crack or two with it, but it's *fineesh.*"

" I ain't kickin'," remarked Jake, taking off his helmet and ruffling his red hair. "You don't want to go gettin' them airmen mad. They'd lay an egg on this house an' you an' me would put in for a harp an' a white nightgown. I wish this war was over."

"It is, pretty near," said Eadie. "We've lost a lot of men and haven't gone very far. And then the major's dead. And also this support battalion that was to leapfrog us won't get by the gunners we left in our wake. Aside from that and these two planes overhead, we haven't anything to worry about."

"We can see better, anyway," muttered Jake, "now that the damn mist is gone."

"The boche can see us, too," remarked Eadie. "That fog helped as much as it hindered. There's too many hills in this part of the world. I don't like it."

"Them glasses you got off the major any good?" asked Jake suddenly.

"By God!" cried Eadie. He put his hand swiftly behind his mask and drew out the major's glasses. He had tucked them there, the strap about his neck, and had forgotten them. "Man," said Eadie admiringly, "they look like a keen pair." He inspected them carefully, putting them to his eyes tentatively. "I can't see a thing," he muttered. His eye roamed about the room and fell upon the stairway that went up in the corner. There was nothing at the top of that stairway but space, but a second look showed a tiny ledge, and the root of what had once been the wall of a room. Bits of wall paper still clung to it.

"Come on up there," said Jake, following Eadie's thought. "We can get a swell look around."

"Uh!" grunted Eadie. "We most likely get a swell slug through our skulls, too. Well, come on. I yearn to peek through these field glasses."

"I forgot my prisoners," muttered Jake. He fingered his lip doubtfully. "I don't want 'em to light out on me," he continued. He regarded the prisoners a second, while Eadie polished the lenses of his field glasses.

"Listen, you birds," began Jake, shaking his immense fist at the prisoners, "I'm a hairy wolf an' the direct descendant of a long line o' catamounts! Never forget it! I'm goin' up them stairs with the sergeant here to look at the scenery. An' if I come down an' find that one of you has moved one foot outta place, I'll knock him into a swound!"

"What the hell is a swound?" asked Eadie, as the two went very carefully up the staircase.

"I don't know," said Jake. "I was to a theayter once where some one fell into one, and from the screechin' an' groanin' an' rollin' around, I judged it's about the last stage."

There was a fairly good view from the ledge. Eadie adjusted the glasses and brought them to bear. The ground seemed to leap at him and he nearly fell. These glasses were a very fine pair, high powered, with longer tubes than the ordinary prism glass, and the effect of first looking through them was startling. Eadie looked toward the American lines, and saw men advancing, probably the support battalion. Toward the German lines he could see nothing. Ah!

"Jake," cried Eadie, "Jake! I can see where this shooting is coming from!" He extended the glasses to Jake without taking his eyes from the place where he had them last focussed. "Look, Jake, at that—what the hell!" His groping hand met space.

"Come down!" yelled Jake. He was at the bottom of the stairs. "Come down! The whole German army is shootin' at yuh!" There was the end of a beam just behind Eadie and something struck this beam quite a blow. Eadie went down without availing himself of the stairway.

From the south end of the town came a faint call, "Come outta that!" The prisoners stood up and appeared to be making preparation for departure. Close at hand a voice that was undoubtedly an officer's, ordered some one out of a cellar and excitedly demanded the battalion commander. There were more voices in the town, some faint, others close at hand. Eadie and Jake skipped across the floor and peeked through the hole in the corner of the wall again. There were many men in olive drab

coming up the street, ducking from doorway to doorway. Across the ruins Eadie could see the bobbing helmets of others who were skirting the town. From time to time one of these men would be hit. Other Americans, urgently invited, came out of cellars and joined the newcomers.

"It's the support battalion," said Eadie; "we might as well go out."

The two stepped back and started to clamber over the débris before the door. "Look out, now," muttered Eadie, "these guys are liable to be nervous." They crossed the rubbish heap and arrived in the street, Jake's prisoners tumbling hastily after them. Eadie was about to curse them all from Jake down, but he saw too many doughboys looking at him, their faces turned toward him with all the curiosity of cows whose pasture has been invaded. These doughboys, rattled as they were, and exceedingly prone to shoot first and look afterwards, seemed to realize that Eadie and Jake were Americans, but one of them, some one in the rear of the first party, saw only the crowding prisoners and hurled a grenade. Eadie saw it coming and fled across the street, Jake following. Five or six infantrymen who were within range of the burst threw themselves down, though such action would not save them from a grenade. The Germans went immediately back into the house. However, the soldier who had thrown the grenade had been nervous and unsettled in mind, else he would not have thrown it in the first place, and that being the case he had simply pulled out the ring and immediately gotten rid of the grenade. It takes about five seconds for the fuse to burn, and in five seconds a man can do a lot of things. One of the infantry, seeing no other way of escape, picked the grenade up and hurled it into an open cellar, where it burst viciously, but did no harm.

"No more grenade throwing!" called the man who had picked up the last one. "Dig those boche out of there! Where did those two men go that ran across the street?"

"They're a coupla runners," advised some one. "I seen 'em with the battalion staff this morning."

"Hey!" called the first speaker, "come out of there! Where's the major?"

Eadie and Jake emerged.

"Where's the major?" the man demanded again. Eadie guessed that this newcomer was an officer, though he wore no insignia.

"The major's dead," replied he.

"Who's in command? Do you know where any of the staff are? Where the hell is every one? What company are you running for?"

"We're artillerymen," said Eadie. "The major was killed out there in a shell hole. I don't know who's in command or where any one is. They pulled a counter attack on us and we've been disorganized ever since."

"Counter attack my granny!" scoffed the officer. "That was some damn fool trying to rush the town. We saw that from the trenches. Well, I'm senior officer until some one ranks me out of it. You men, bomb all these cellars and let's get to hell out of here. This town makes too easy an aiming point." A man was hit at less than a yard's distance, as if to give weight to the officer's remarks. Every one else took to flight again. The officer cursed himself hoarse.

A very trembling guard appeared with Jake's prisoners. "Just a minute there, buddy," called Jake, "where you fixin' to go with them squareheads?"

"I'm gonna take 'em out," replied the other.

"You just leave 'em be," said Jake. "I'm lookin' after them krauts. They belong to me."

"Lay off," said Eadie, seizing Jake's arm. "You've

got to turn 'em in somewhere. You don't think they let you take 'em all the way to Bordeaux, do you? He'll only go back as far as the M. P. line with 'em."

"Well, what the hell is the use of takin' prisoners if you can't go back with 'em?"

Another man fell with a sharp cry.

"Let's get out of here!" yelled the officer. "Go up on the hill and come down again behind the town. Then any one that's in these cellars will come out and surrender. You two artillerymen stay with me. Do you know how to ask for a barrage?"

"I know," said Eadie, "but I don't think it will do any good."

"Well, you do it anyway. I'll tell you when. Here! You see that clump of bushes up there? Wait for me there. I've got to go back and pry some of these dugout barnacles loose!" He went raging back along the street, and assisted by some non-commissioned officers, began dragging men from behind walls and out of doorways by the scruff of their necks.

"Come on," said Jake, "I know how we can get through those houses. I remember when I took my prisoners. You go in a house and out the back."

"Are there any stiffs there?" asked Eadie with distaste. "I don't want to go near any stiffs, I've seen too many already to-day."

"There's no stiffs," Jake assured him. "None of our fellers got that far."

They went in the front door of a house and avoiding the holes in the floor, through which one caught glimpses of a cellar full of rotting straw and tumbled blankets, went out the back and cautiously climbed the hill, keeping below the crest as much as possible. From here they had an even better view of the battlefield than from the town. Smoke, smoke in all directions, balloons on the

far horizon in the direction of the American lines, and balloons on the other horizon where the Germans were. Westward were thick woods with shrapnel blinking above the treetops, and to the east a red-roofed town and a road with ambulances running on it. Here was Eadie, on the crest of the American advance, and on the right ambulances running!

"They're Americans," said Eadie, looking at them through his field glasses. He pointed them out to the officer who arrived at that moment with two others like him and a group of infantry.

"Yes, I daresay they've got ambulances running," said the officer. "That's the goddamned regular army for you, go kiting across the landscape and devil take any one else. You'd think they'd give a look once in a while to see how the rest of us were getting on, or not getting on, rather."

The officer began to send messengers off with directions for an advance. He told the other two men, who, like himself, bore no insignia, but who had officer stamped all over them, that he decided from the fact that there was no artillery resistance, that the Germans had pulled out and that what was needed was an energetic advance. Eadie gathered that the advance was about five hours behind their schedule. The officer was a young man, clear eyed, and an athlete. He had been a football player, probably president of his class, and was undoubtedly a splendid leader. An officer, however, must have more than ability to lead, especially if he has non-commissioned officers who are as ignorant as himself. Eadie, on his stomach beside Jake, nudged the latter.

"He's going to leave that town as full of boche as a dog of fleas," said Eadie, "and out they'll come the minute we go past and blow hell out of us."

"I don't think so," said Jake. "I think the prisoners I took was the last. The others pulled foot about the time that bold brave looey took his platoon into the town on the gallop and made a lot of work for the buryin' squad."

"What's all this?" cried Eadie.

"Why, when we was out there in the hole with the major a looey takes a platoon or so and makes a rush for the town with a lot o' yellin' an' grenade throwin'. I don't think they got far."

"I didn't see that," said Eadie. "I thought that noise was a counter attack."

"You was too busy keepin' your head down," replied Jake.

"That so? Well, you want to keep your block of solid bone down, too, or you'll get a slug through it."

"Listen, artillery," said the officer, drawing over beside Eadie, "what can you do for a little fire? See that hill over there? There's a pill box on top of it. That's where this fire is coming from. Then I suppose your eagle eye can see that hill way up the valley with the church on it? They've got observatories there with glasses in 'em so strong they can read the number on our collar ornaments. Now, until we find some one better, I'm in command. I'm captain of what's left of F company. I want some fire. Can I get it or not?"

Eadie took out his code book and consulted it again. He found nothing there that he had not seen before, except that a chain of green stars was to announce the battalion's arrival at a certain road, and a red smoke the capture of Montfaucon, wherever that was.

"I can't do it," said Eadie. "There's no way you can call for fire on points not designated beforehand except by telephone or messenger. We might get a plane over here and stake out our line with panels and then make him the signal that we were held up by artillery fire. I

don't advise it, because I fired a bundle of stars for a plane to come over and when it came it was a boche."

"There were two of them," said the officer. "I saw them myself. They've beat it. I hear they don't stick around very long in one spot because we've really got pursuit planes and they really will come out and chase a boche away. At least, the boche think so. Well, if we can't get any artillery we'll have to do it with the rifle. In five minutes we try. Give me a cigarette."

The advance did not begin again in five minutes, nor yet in fifty. The appearance of the Americans on the rising ground above the town had been the signal for a hail of fire, mostly from the left front, where there were considerable forests. A patrol went cautiously forward toward the pill box and made progress, and Eadie, watching them through his glasses, could see them getting closer and closer to the concrete structure. Some enterprising officer began to follow this patrol with a force of about company strength. A patrol on the other flank, crawling out across the fields, was met with a burst of fire from a patch of woods and killed. Their bodies lay there in a little group, silently marking the limit of advance in that direction.

A faint popping and the gushing of smoke from the pill box announced that the patrol had managed to get close enough to bomb the place. The officer with Eadie had hardly expressed his satisfaction when a man came crawling up from the direction of the town, demanding the whereabouts of the commanding officer.

"What do you want him for?" asked the officer.

"I've got a message for him from the colonel," replied the soldier.

"Let me see it." The officer took the slip of paper and opened it. He read aloud, but softly, as though to himself.

"To the Commanding Officer, flank battalion: Advance. If an advance is not signaled in your sector within five minutes, consider yourself relieved from command and report to me under arrest."

"Hmmm! That's nice." The officer looked thoughtfully out over the country before him. A little way in front lay the bodies of the patrol that had been killed on the left flank. Farther to the left white smoke marked the position of another regiment of the division. They had not advanced as far as he had, but had evidently found something to bomb. On the right things looked a little more cheerful. A long brown line now reached from the pill box to the positions just beyond the town. "All right," said the officer sadly, "tell him I'll advance. Tell him Captain Lawrence is in command of the battalion now."

The messenger crawled back down the hill and Eadie nudged Jake. "There's a John for you," whispered Eadie. "He should have steered that messenger somewhere else. He might know that anything that came from rear to front would be a lot of red-hot peeve. Now he's elected himself goat for whatever hard luck we run into."

"Forward!" yelled the officer, blowing his whistle. He signaled with his arm and received quite a hearty response. Men who had been concealing themselves in shell holes and behind folds in the ground and remnants of hedge fences, crawled forward quite readily. Most of them had seen the progress of the attack on the pill box.

"You wait here, sergeant," said the officer. "You know a one-pounder outfit when you see it? Well, there ought to be one come by here and if it doesn't you go down into the town and find it. Then bring it up on that hill for me."

The officer went down the hill, consulting his compass, and evidently talking to Jake, who paid no heed, but kept looking sadly back at Eadie. Eadie turned about and surveyed the country behind him. He knew what to look for. A one-pounder was a toy cannon, a tiny model of a 75, that looked like something a man would give his son to play soldier with, or to celebrate Fourth of July. This cannon had wheels, of course, and a ridiculous shield, and was drawn by a tiny limber and a mule. When the gun went into action, however, its likeness to a toy ceased. The gunners would unhitch it from its cute little limber and drag it themselves to a good position where the gun would be taken off the wheels and set up on a tripod. The gun having been aimed, fire would be commenced with small steel shells, filled with high explosive powder. Then let any machine gun, pill box, or minenwerfer within range look to itself.

Eadie spotted the column after a few minutes' search. Instead of coming as far forward as they could with their mules, the gunners had evidently unlimbered at the jump-off, and had been dragging their guns ever since. This must have been exceedingly tiring, and if the advance had not been held up so long, the one-pounder companies would have been left too far behind to be of any use. Eadie put away his field glasses and crawled down the hill to the town. He found the head of the one-pounder column at the south entrance of the town, a disgusted officer sitting on a stone, and the personnel stretched out on the ground. To this officer Eadie presented the request for the advance of the one-pounders.

"All he can have is one," said the officer. "I'm glad to give it to him. We'd like to see some service. First squad, go with this sergeant. You'll be under the orders of the battalion commander. He wants you to do some shooting."

The squad leaped at their gun with alacrity. A sergeant barked orders at them with drill-book distinctness. Two men seized the gun from its carriage, two more picked up the trail—the thing came apart like a take-down shot-gun—and a fifth man removed the wheels to the ditch. Two sad-eyed men, who were probably spare gunners, and the sergeant, burdened themselves with ammunition, and looked at Eadie.

"Forward!" said Sergeant Eadie. It occurred to him that it might have been better to have left the gun on the wheels a little longer, for it would be a long carry up the hill, but the one-pounder men must know what they were doing.

The carry was indeed long. From shell hole to shell hole they went, and once over the crest of the first rise, they began to be fired at. Bullets cracked overhead, a shell evidently intended for them exploded within hair-raising distance, but none of the men were hit. Eadie on his own initiative took the squad a roundabout way, and brought them up the eastern face of the hill on which the pill box stood, along a trench system that had been turned into a gigantic furrow by the American artillery the night before. Here the sweating, panting, one-pounder men flung themselves to the ground and took a five-minute rest. Their next surge forward brought them to the pill box, where they found Jake, the acting battalion commander, and another officer impatiently awaiting them. The one-pounder was put into action, though the men were not as snappy and alert as they had been before the kilometer climb laden with gun and ammunition. But it was finally set up and the officer in command, Captain Lawrence, took the one-pounder sergeant out on the flank a little way and pointed out some targets to him, principally the clump of brush and another pill box down the valley. The one-pounder began its peculiar whining bark

and the doughboys in the surrounding holes were highly encouraged.

"Now then," said Captain Lawrence, coming back to where the two artillerymen and the other officer lay on their stomachs, "we're going forward again. I've been looking around up here. The most resistance is from those woods over there on the left and from farther up the valley. From the right and front we don't get anything. That's another division's sector anyway. So we'll pound the woods and the valley a while and that ought to allow us to advance."

Ping! went the one-pounder, and the watchers on the hill saw presently a little thread of white smoke wander out of the woods. Ping! went the gun again. It fired for several minutes, then at the suggestion of Captain Lawrence and after some hoarse shouting on the part of the sergeant, the target was changed and the gun fired a dozen rounds or so into the clump of brush in the valley. The sergeant, then exclaiming that he could see troop movements in the valley, began sniping about at will. The sixty rounds or so that the gunners had brought with them were soon used up and the spare gunners were sent for more. The infantry, lying about in the shelter of folds of the ground, enjoyed themselves hugely. Some opened cans of hash and ate. The distant roar of the battle held no terrors for them. The men sent for ammunition returned.

Ping! went the gun gleefully. There was a sudden scurry of feet. Eadie, rolling a cigarette, looked up. A white-faced officer, his ill-fitting blouse bulging from his pistol belt, bareheaded, his breeches torn in great rents and showing bloody wire cuts in his legs, came rushing into the group about the one-pounder and knocked the gunner headlong. He seized a shell and hurled it into the scenery, grabbed a leg of the tripod and grunting tre-

mendously, overturned the gun. The protesting sergeant he knocked into a sprawling heap.

"Oh, Jesus!" cried Eadie, "lie low, Jake! Don't mix in this! They'll probably shoot him full of holes."

"I'm lying low," said Jake in a muffled voice, for his face was buried in the dirt. "Tell 'em to put up their guns, sargint."

"Steady, men!" called Captain Lawrence. "Put up those guns! What's the trouble here, major?"

The officer who had upset the gun turned panting. He wore a pistol belt and what was known as a mail order uniform, but he had a major's gold leaves on his shoulder.

"Who—who's shooting that gun?" he demanded.

"The gunners," replied Captain Lawrence.

The major thereupon swung on Captain Lawrence, a sharp vicious jab that would have probably laid the captain away for some time, but that several soldiers hurled themselves on the major's arm and thereby stopped the blow.

"Take him away," went on the captain. "Give him a shot of coke and a bucket of water over his head and let him wait for the doctor."

The major flung the men from him as though they had been so many babes. He held up his hand.

"Listen!" he cried. "Just a minute until I get my breath!" No one moved. There was that in the major's eye and attitude that commanded obedience.

"Turn around," whispered Eadie. "There'll be a hell of a smell over this and we want to be able to say we didn't see it."

"Not me," said Jake, "it's too interestin'. I like to go to court anyways. It gets yuh out of work."

"You big ass!" began the major, pointing his finger at Captain Lawrence. "You damned fool! You've been shelling the hell out of my battalion!"

"What!" cried all, like the chorus in an opera.

"You idiot! You're under arrest or relieved from command or whatever they do! I've a goddamned good mind to bring my outfit up here and police you all up! Have you got any sense? Did it ever occur to you that fire to the flank might land in some other element of the division? No, it did not! You're insane! You ought to be killed like a mad dog! You've driven my men out of a position it took three hours to capture. Well, I'll have your hide for this. Don't forget it for a minute. And you men"—he shook his fist at the one-pounder crew—"this time ten years from now you'll still be breaking rocks!" Abruptly the major turned and ran down the hill.

"Set up that gun again," directed the captain. "I still think he's crazy."

Then it was that things began to happen. Runners arrived, a half dozen of them, all with imperative orders to cease firing and to advance. Fire, possibly from American troops who had been shot up by the one-pounder—was suddenly opened on the troops on the hill and many were hit. Captain Lawrence, a little white about the lips, blew his whistle and ordered an advance across the plateau. The one-pounder was taken down and the gunners sweated forward with the infantry. This battalion, because it had advanced ahead of the others, and because the troops on the left had fallen back under the misdirected fire of the one-pounder, now had its flank in the air and began to receive fire from both flank and front. The men lay down, the one-pounder was set up, and firing very carefully to the front, it quieted some machine gun fire from that direction.

The afternoon began to grow into night and the battalion, like a wounded snake, dragged its bleeding length slower and slower across the plateau that shelved upward

to the ruined town in the distance. On the hill they had been unmolested for two reasons. The right of the hill was in the sector of another division, a division of veterans, who had gone along their sector rapidly and thoroughly, and who were now some miles away to the north. Elements of this division had lost their way in the fog and had swung in and attacked the Germans in front of Eadie's battalion, in flank. The Germans had welcomed them royally, but the Americans had not broken off the attack until well on in the afternoon, when it had become apparent that not only were they lost, but that further progress in the direction in which they were going was impossible. Once these troops withdrew, the Germans could turn all their attention to the division of which Eadie's battalion formed a part.

All along the front the German resistance stiffened. The element of surprise was gone, the beaten zone of the American artillery had been passed, the Germans knew what was going on. This was no feint, this was no demonstration; nine divisions, a quarter of a million men on a front of less than twenty miles, meant a drive. And the German had something to defend here, he had a railroad that was his jugular vein. If it was cut, he perished. He threw in fresh troops, brought up reserves by truck, by rail, by narrow gauge, and on foot. He issued orders to stop the advance and the troops that held the front line did their best to comply with the order.

The troops of Eadie's battalion soon found that the easy time they had had since they had left the town was over. Their advance had been so slow that the enemy machine gunners had been able to retire before them, and to reinforce the troops in the intermediate defense position. The fire of machine guns was terrific. Dust rose in clouds, for the gunners fired low and many of their bullets slid along the ground, throwing up dirt and stones.

An American machine gun battalion had occupied Pill Box hill and was laying a barrage over the heads of its own troops. The one-pounder fired valiantly, and Eadie could hear others whining away down the valley. There was a line of resistance in front of the battalion, in front of the division for that matter, and the Americans, instead of being able to attack it with the vigor of the morning, when they were fresh from the jump-off and the enemy still stunned from the bombardment, must go to the assault weary, their nerve already shaken and their strength already drained by a day's casualties. As for the enemy, they were doubtless fresh troops brought up from the rear during the afternoon.

"This is the intermediate position we've hit," said Captain Lawrence to Eadie. "We were due here at ten o'clock. It's four-thirty now. We're only six hours late. We'll likely be later before we see the other side of this trench system. What do you think the chances are on a little fire from the artillery?"

"They ought to be good," said Eadie. "We've got balloons up and the birds in the balloons know where we are. If I shoot up an S. O. S. rocket we ought to get some action."

"We ain't got no balloons," interrupted Jake. "They was all shot down long ago. I seen it on the hill."

"That's where those planes went that were flapping around over us," said Eadie. "I'm glad they left us alone this afternoon. Planes are bad stuff."

"Well, never mind the lecture, shoot me a rocket," ordered the captain. Eadie consulted the code and then handed it to Jake.

"You might as well get some instruction," said the sergeant. "If I'm hit, you'll have to carry on. Hunt in the code for an S. O. S. signal and then shoot it. Here's the pistol."

The officer, who might not have approved of this procedure, was too busy watching events to the front to pay attention to what the two artillerymen were doing. Jake selected a rocket and putting it into the pistol, snapped the apparatus shut and, extending his arm, sent the signal sailing.

"They'll see it," said Eadie, "yellow smoke, at a height of seventy-five yards. There's a parachute holds it up and it stays up there about ten seconds. Look, captain, if there are any units too close to the boche, they'd better pull back because the barrage might fall a little short."

"Small chance," replied the captain. "We're still the farthest advanced of the units of this division. The division's only got about a mile and a half of front. You'd think we could get on faster. Where's your barrage?"

"It takes a minute or two to figure the fire dope and lay the guns," said Eadie. "It'll take 'em some time to get started because they'll have to dope out what the rocket means."

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. The German fire, in view of the fact that the Americans were not advancing, began to slacken.

"Fire another rocket, Jake," directed Eadie.

"Which one?" asked Jake.

"Why, the same kind that you fired the last time, hammerhead!"

"I don't know what kind it was," muttered Jake.

"Why, you picked it out of the book and then off the pile all yourself."

"Naw," grinned Jake slyly. "I seen the one you was going to put in the pistol but laid down again when you give me the book, and I picked that one up and fired it."

"By God, you're learning to be an observer, anyway," said Eadie. "Listen, nit-wit. The rocket you want is a

yellow smoke. Well, hunt around in your pockets and see if you've got a yellow smoke. It's marked on the bottom of the cartridge."

Jake hunted, but after he had taken out all his rockets and laid them in a neat row in front of him, as Eadie had done with his, he could not find what he sought.

"There it is!" snorted Eadie, picking one up and showing the words to Jake "Fumée Jaune" on the base of the cartridge. "It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"Aw, what the hell does 'fumey john' mean to me?" cried Jake. "I'm a white man. I don't savvy no frog lingo."

"Shoot the rocket!" said Eadie. Away went the rocket and while it was still in air, shells began to burst in front. They did not form a hurricane of fire by any means, but they made a comfortable noise. Eadie, counting the bursts, decided that a battalion, three batteries, was firing.

"About ten minutes or so of this and we can advance again," said the captain cheerfully.

It is a heart warming thing to have a barrage arrive in answer to a rocket. So many times a whole dump full of rockets is fired and the barrage is non-existent. And other times the barrage lands in astonishing places, anywhere but where it will do good. But this one was well placed, it was enthusiastic, and the infantry watched it with pleasure. Between the barrage and the one-pounders and machine guns the Germans would have to pull out, or be killed.

A half hour the barrage continued to play, then suddenly stopped. The infantry, without waiting for the order, sprang forward, struggled through some half destroyed wire and found themselves in the intermediate position. It was empty. Reverting material, the woven brush and chicken wire that keeps the trench wall from caving in, was scattered about, sheets of corrugated iron,

all peppered with holes, stuck up out of the tumbled earth. Dugouts were caved in, bits of furniture lay here and there, with a few blankets, stick grenades, and a rifle or two. Of the defenders of the trench there was no sign. There were neither wounded nor dead. And the fire of the German machine gunners, that had been so long quiet, once more began with redoubled fury.

"Well, let's keep going!" yelled the captain. "Don't stop here! They've pulled out, men, let's get after them!" The officers with the companies urged their men forward and the battalion climbed out of the rear wall of the system and went on.

The battalion staff followed the advance, hurried from one flank of the battalion to the other and directed the placing of the one-pounder when any place appeared that looked as though it might be occupied. The staff was not unwieldy, for it consisted only of Captain Lawrence, Sergeant Eadie, Jake, and a runner from Captain Lawrence's company.

The captain alone sustained the advance. He pulled men from holes and shoved them forward with his hands. He personally directed the surrounding and capture of a light machine gun that was all that was left of a strong-point organized in some artificially deepened and connected shell holes. The captain had no tactical plan of advance. His only idea was to keep the men going forward. Their objective was still a long way off, but he had hopes of its achievement during the night.

At sunset the battalion had progressed to where they could look down a funnel-shaped valley in the woods on their left. It was a narrow gap, like a gun-sight, and at the far end of it was the sun setting redly through the smoke. This valley was strongly organized by the enemy, for the infantry now received a heavier fire than any they had yet experienced. Here Captain Lawrence was

hit in the arm, but beyond putting on a bandage he paid it no attention. He was hit again five minutes later, on the same wrist, and the runner was killed.

"They've spotted the staff," said Eadie. "They can see us running around and waving our hands."

"Look at those sons of bitches in the hole over there!" cried the captain. "That's what disgusts me!" He pointed with his good arm to a half dozen gallant defenders of democracy who had huddled into a shell hole and, having allowed the advance to pass them, now began to timidly make their way out with every intention of breaking for the rear and safety.

"I'll fix 'em," muttered the captain. "Here, sergeant, help me put a dressing on that wound, it hurts like hell. They tell me it's only the slight wounds that hurt. How about it? You've been wounded."

"I wasn't wounded," said Eadie, winding a first-aid bandage around the captain's wrist. "I was gassed."

"Do they let you wear a wound stripe for that?"

Eadie made no reply, but continued to wind the bandage. He made a knot, secured it, and tucked the ends under.

"Now then for these skulkers!" said the captain. He drew his pistol and the three men started for the group in the other shell hole, some of whose members had already gone back.

"What organization do you men belong to?" asked the captain sternly. The men jumped at the sound of the officer's voice and looked sideways at his pistol. They said nothing, but nervously clutched their rifles or began to fumble at their masks.

"We're all that's left of H company," said one man finally. "Our officers are all dead and we don't see what good we can do by staying here and getting killed."

"You can stop a bullet from killing a better man!"

answered the captain. "Who gave you authority to run? This isn't the Russian army. You're a bunch of yellow bastards." He put his pistol back in its holster. "I'll give you fifteen seconds to get back to the line or I'll give you the damnedest licking ever a man got. If I shot you some one might think you had died a hero's death."

"I'm not afraid of getting killed," said the first speaker, "but I am not going to be butchered. I'm no sheep; I'm an American citizen." The captain strode forward and, swinging his arm in a short jabbing motion, knocked the other man into a whimpering heap. The captain drew back his arm for another blow.

"Git!" he commanded.

Another voice spoke, a voice of steel, the hooting of an oncoming shell. Eadie threw himself down, hitting a rock and bruising himself badly.

SLAM! As though some one had hurled shut a gigantic cellar flap. A pause and then the sound of earth falling in shovelfuls. Down came stones, dirt, pieces of steel, sod, all kinds of débris, thudding on the backs of the recumbent men and rattling on their helmets. Eadie sensed that the captain was still standing and, turning his head to see, he made sure that he was.

"Get up!" directed the captain, "up and on your way!" Eadie got to his feet, sniffing the smell of the high explosive for signs of gas. The captain's knee shook just the slightest.

"By God, he's been hit again," thought the sergeant.

Some of the men in the shell hole got to their feet, others only to their knees, and all looked at the officer. They were impressed. He had remained on his feet while all the rest had flopped. The captain opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. He clenched his fist and started toward the skulkers, but his knee shook again and this time it went out from under him entirely, so that he

fell forward into the arms of Eadie and Jake, who laid him gently down.

"Where'd it getcha?" asked Jake earnestly.

"Never mind," said Eadie, "he's dead. I know by the way he feels."

Two or three infantrymen came cautiously over and watched Eadie fold the captain's hands and put his helmet over his face.

"What did he want to stand up like that for?" muttered one of them. "Can you tie that?"

"He wanted to show us he was braver'n us," replied another. "I tell yuh this place is a poor one to be brave in."

"Let's get to hell out of here," suggested some one.

The man who had been knocked down by the captain now came over to the group.

"What outfit do you men belong to?" he asked.

"We're artillerymen," said Eadie, "from the Third Division."

"Oh!" cried the other. "The goddamned regular army! They shove us in here to crack the hardest nut in the whole sector just because we're men that can earn our living on the outside. These are the guys that want to shove us up against some more machine guns!"

Jake was about to reply, but Eadie waved his hand to him to be silent.

"We don't give a damn whether you go or stay," said the sergeant. "There's a barrage of military police in back of you that a rat couldn't get through. And if they get their hooks on you you'll wish you'd been killed up here. This isn't my first scrap, I know what I'm talking about. I wasn't shoved into the army with a bayonet, nor shoved onto the front lines with another one. If you were any kind of a man I'd lick you for what you said about the regulars, but as it is I'll give you a good kick if you open your mouth again. If it hadn't been for us

you'd be wading around the Atlantic Ocean now to save yourself from being a boche prisoner."

"Huh!" grunted the other sarcastically. He hitched the sling of his rifle and looked around for his friends. They were some distance off, moving to the rear.

"Gwan," said Jake, "yuh better start runnin' now if you want to catch up with 'em."

"Huh," grunted the other man again. Then he turned with a sneer and went off in the direction the others had taken.

"There's a hero for you," observed Eadie. "He'll go home and be president of the Society of Veterans of the American Excavationary Forces yet. He's just the kind of a bird to shine in public life."

"I don't know but what he's right," said Jake. "We won't do no good to get killed. This outfit has run itself down like a kettled steer. Let's go."

"No, don't let's go!" objected Eadie. "I want to just as much as you do, but there'd be too many explanations to make. And no alibi goes either."

"Well, what can we do?" asked Jake. "We haven't got no officers."

"Jump in the hole," said Eadie. "We'll think it over."

He surveyed the darkening battlefield. There was nothing to be seen that would indicate that some twenty thousand men were within a mile. There was nothing to see but the rolling ground, the black woods against the fading crimson of the sunset, and here and there, at scattered intervals, two or three men in olive drab, or the quick gleam of a bayonet.

Jake plucked at Eadie's sleeve. "Sargint," said he, "I'll never make a liaison guy, I can see that from this day's work. Sargint, I'm goin' to resign. I been a hard-rock man all my life an' what I think of a skinner I could be hung for, but I'll go back to drivin' team an' welcome."

The sergeant apparently did not hear.

"Sargint," cried Jake, "it's time you an' me was goin'. We're goin' to get ourselves killed!"

"Shut up, now," said Eadie, "I'm tryin' to think."

"Forget it!" said Jake. "I don't want to get killed to-day. I got some business to fix first. Sargint, I made over my insurance to a aunt an' I'm sore at her now. I want to change my benifishary. Man, I'd roll over in my grave if I thought she had all that money. Lemme go back and do that an' you can kill me as many times as you want to."

"Nix," said Eadie. "We've got to hunt up some officers. If this outfit once establishes a line, then we can go out, maybe. They've been fighting all day and their officers have all been killed off. Also their nerve must be pretty ragged after seeing their dead so long. They might pull out and go clear back to the jump-off, and then how would we know where the line was when we were asked back at the outfit? Too many explanations to make, Jake." The sergeant reached out of the hole and picked up the captain's pistol. "I may need this before we get through," he remarked.

"Pigeon-blood!" exclaimed Jake. "It ain't our fault an' yet there's no way to get out of it. If I don't git killed, me an' the liaison detail parts company right off the minute we get outta range."

"Let's drag," said Eadie, "and see what we can see with the major's nice new glasses. The only way to go out with no questions asked is to get hit."

"Not gassed?" suggested Jake.

"No, not gassed, you big skull. Didn't you hear that crack the captain passed about my wound stripe? Don't get gassed, Jake, you'll regret it the rest of your life."

They began to make their way forward again, and Eadie had only taken a few steps when he stumbled

against something hard and fell. He got to his feet muttering and began to feel about to see what had tripped him. His hand came in contact with a round cold object, a handle, then a long flat surface. It was the one-pounder gun, and as Eadie started on again, his hobnails clanked on the tripod. Of the crew there was no sign. They had abandoned their gun and gone to distant and quieter parts.

Chapter VI

LIEUTENANT CONNOR

THE first hour or so of the night Eadie and Jake passed in calling out to men they heard plodding by and asking them if they knew the whereabouts of any battalion or regimental command group. Sometimes the men did not answer, other times they said "No"; at other times they laughed harshly and directed Eadie to find the deepest dugout ten miles back, prophesying that there would be a command group in it.

"These guys are all goin' back," Jake observed finally. "I'm for goin' with 'em."

"Let's wait a little," answered the sergeant. "You'll get just as much shell fire and just as much machine gun peeve as you will here. I'll give you another lesson in liaison. You see those flares that keep going up? Well, the boche don't shoot those over their rear areas, they go up from the front line. And as long as they don't get any nearer, we're safe from getting gathered in."

"Unhook your ear from them machine guns a minute," continued Jake, "and see what you hear."

"I don't need to," answered the sergeant bruskly.

In the daytime, when a man is hit, the medical personnel or the stretcher bearers can see him, but at night this is not possible. The wounded have a very real fear of being left to die in the darkness and they give voice to their feelings. These men are not a few. After an assault they are strewn like leaves and their voices make quite a clamor.

Neither man spoke for a long time. "That's my big fear," said Eadie finally, "to be badly wounded and left in this God-forsaken country for a day or two. What have you got to eat on you?"

"Hardtack and bully," answered Jake. "Look, why can't you an' me go back to that town an' get in the cellars of it, have supper, sleep, an' come out again at daybreak?"

"Well, I'll tell you," replied the sergeant. "You're not deaf and you must have heard the cracks that every would-be humorist has been passing at me because I went away on a mission up there on the Marne and never came back. Well, they can all go to hell. My conscience is clear and I've got the old G. O. that says I can wear a wound stripe, but this stuff about goldbrick and jawbone wound stripe gets on a man's nerves after a while. This time I don't want any one to have anything to say. When we go out and I'm asked where I left the infantry, I want to be able to say the P. C. is at such a place, and the co-ordinates of the front line are x so much and y some other thing, from such a place to somewhere else."

"I think you're a damned fool!" replied Jake. "How many men we seen get killed to-day? Bing! It's done. Look at that captain. He was going to be a brave boy an' not flop for the shell. I'll never get the feel o' his blouse with the blood comin' through the holes in it out o' my hands if I live to a hundred. What's a wound stripe? Sargint, a guy gets wounds in this war he'll take the scars of to his grave, an' he don't rate no wound stripe for 'em either!"

Eadie silently unwound his slicker and overcoat from his shoulder. "It's coming on to rain," he remarked. "Let's go back to that last trench and see what's in it. That crack that doughboy made about finding the staff in a dugout might not be so far off after all."

A cold drizzle of rain began to fall. The two men

stumbled from shell hole to shell hole, working back to the trench system they had crossed earlier in the afternoon. It seemed easy enough to just turn around and go back, but after they had gone some distance Eadie decided that they were still moving parallel to the front, since the flares the enemy kept sending up did not grow any more distant. They met many men, all like themselves, hunting for something. Runners were trying to find companies, distracted machine gunners with their weapons over their shoulders fell in and out of holes.

"You will note, Jake," remarked Eadie, as a platoon of gunners went thumping by, "that the guns those men are carrying are Hotchkiss and this division that we were with is armed with another type. Hence these gunners are from some other outfit and lost."

"Good luck to 'em," said Jake, "I got troubles o' my own."

"There are worse jobs than ours," said Eadie. "Those guns weigh fifty pounds each and the tripod weighs another fifty. How would you like to lug one all night and then find you were two divisions away from where you belonged?"

"Sargint," replied Jake, "don't go borrowin' trouble. You needn't give me no lectures on liaison nor on nothin'. I'm an ignorant man an' I know it. This stuff takes too many brains. I'm goin' back to drivin' mules or diggin' holes or workin' in the kitchen. It's a whole hell of a lot easier on the nerves."

They finally found a road, one with high banks, and here they decided to wait for daylight. Eadie contributed a can of hardtack and Jake some bully beef. This, with water from their canteens, made their first meal since the night before. They dared not smoke. Once finished eating, they lay back against the bank and tried to sleep, their feet in the weeds of the ditch, and cold water up

to their knees. Eadie managed to sleep at intervals. He was awakened first by a shell bursting. A second time men stringing wire fell over his feet and then started to roll him bodily into the ditch, thinking him a corpse. The fine rain drifted across his face and the wind now and again brought the crackle of machine guns from up the valley to his ears. Once he heard the rattling of carts. One-pounders, perhaps, or ammunition carts trying to find their companies. From the snatches of conversation he heard from time to time he judged that the drive had met with a heavy check, losses had been frightful, units had become hopelessly intermixed, every one was lost, and many outfits had disappeared entirely.

The sergeant, some time in the early hours, began to dream. He was at home again, somewhere, before an open fire. He reclined in a deep armchair and inhaled the most delightful odors of broiling steak. How warm the fire was! He seemed to be all alone, he and the fire and the steak. He spread his limbs and reveled in the warmth and the red glow of the fire. He began then to awaken, he could feel consciousness returning, but he held to that chair as hard as he could, he gripped the arms desperately to keep himself in that room. It was no use. He awoke, though he did not open his eyes. He was still in the ditch, leaning back against the bank, his hands deep in his overcoat pockets, his face upturned to the rain. No fire, no steak. He opened his eyes, feeling a strong inclination to weep. It was quite light, there was a mist of rain over the distant hills, but in the foreground he could see a stretch of plain, ruins, and a hill with brush on the top. Tiny brown figures ran about on this hill and white smoke made a contrast with the gray mist. Some doughboy outfit had made an assault up there at daybreak.

A man groaned heavily at Eadie's side. "Yuh 'wake

yet?" It was Jake, his eyes bloodshot, and a red beard beginning to make an untidy appearance.

"Yeh, I'm awake," answered the sergeant. "I wish I could have slept a little longer. I was dreaming about steaks and, boy, I could smell that steak just as plain as I can see now."

"Ahhhh!" groaned Jake again, getting to his feet. "Sargint, I'm stiff as a poker." He stamped about in the road. "Well, I earned a dollar yesterday an' I'll earn another one to-day. I'll remark that they'll be the toughest two iron boys I ever made in my life an' I've made some tough ones!"

Eadie got stiffly up from the mud and took out the major's field glasses again.

"We made one good haul yesterday and that's these glasses," he remarked, putting them to his eyes. "It was almost worth coming up here for." He looked all around, but the mist and rain made visibility poor.

"You can put them things up," remarked Jake out of the depths of his collar. "I can see trouble with the naked eye. Lookit!" He pointed with his muddy forefinger. In the lee of a little knoll about a hundred yards away was a group of men. They crouched close to the ground, but from time to time one would stand up and look at something with his field glasses. These men were variously dressed, some wore the mackinaw issued to truck drivers and motorcyclemen, one had on a long sheepskin coat, others wore trench coats, and two the long, old issue slicker of green oilskin. There was a continuous flashing of white paper. These were maps being unfolded and folded again to keep the rain off them. Map cases were forbidden as tending to indicate officers to enemy sharpshooters, although an officer could be identified by a multitude of other signs.

"That's a staff," said Eadie, "and divisional by the

size of it. Anyway brigade. Let's go over and bring 'em the good news. They may tell us we can go home."

"Didn't I hear some one say something about being relieved?" muttered Jake. "There's a relief due us now, ain't there?"

"Yes," said the sergeant, "but don't bank on it and then you won't be disappointed. Baldy and Short Mack probably started for us after supper last night. They're as certain as pay day. We'll see 'em some time, but God knows when. All we need now is to get permission to go home."

They approached the group of officers and then Jake waited while Eadie, going on, picked out the man who seemed the least occupied and asked him who was in command.

"What do you want to know for?" asked the least occupied man. He was young and trying hard to be military and grow a mustache, but with little apparent success in either direction.

Every head came up at the sound of the young officer's voice.

"Here, who's that?" cried three or four at once. "Who the hell do you think you are, there, Ducrot? What do you mean by delaying messengers? Here, soldier, what organization are you from?"

"Here, you," called the man in the sheepskin coat, "where's the 151st Brigade P. C.?"

"Do you know where Courlamont Farm is?" cried another.

A tall man with spectacles arose and walked over to Eadie. "You've been in the fighting, haven't you?" asked he. "Are you a runner? Give me your message if it's for me. I'm in command here. Where did you leave your unit?"

"Sir," said Eadie, saluting, "I'm an artilleryman. I'm with the liaison detail."

"Oh! An artilleryman!" cried all. Some of them added obscene words expressive of their disgust. The man in spectacles looked at Eadie with distaste.

"What the hell do you want to bother me for?" he demanded.

"I'm due for relief, sir," answered the sergeant, "and I'm supposed to bring back the location of the troops I leave and any requests for fire on special targets they have. My own officer and the major commanding the unit I was with have both been killed and I wanted to report to some one responsible."

"Well, I'll give you a message for the artillery," said the other. He led Eadie a little bit to one side and pointed down the crooked valley. Far away in the mist rose a sharp-pointed hill, crowned with white ruins. "See that hill down there? That's Montfaucon. Tell the artillery to shoot at it. All I ask of them is to shoot at that hill and to keep their goddamned shells out of my infantry. Now get out of here and don't bother me any more."

The two artillerymen went away across the shell-spotted field.

"What did they say to yuh?" asked Jake.

"Nothing."

Jake snickered. "Brave boy, you only done your duty," said he. The sergeant, looking about the landscape for some sign of a road, made a wrathful reply.

"I can't do it," grinned Jake. "I ain't built right. You crave a road? Well, I'll bet there's one in a gulch over there. Lookit way down the valley. Put your expensive glasses you robbed off the dead on that dark streak an' see if it ain't a column o' trucks. If we go down there I bet we'll find a road."

"It's trucks," said Eadie. "There's some kind of a dump there, ammunition or ration or something. It's a couple of miles, but let's go. We can get a ride back on one of those trucks. We might just as well have gone last night." There was a bitter note in Eadie's concluding words.

"Ah," said Jake, "but we done our duty by stayin'!" To this remark Eadie made no reply.

Beyond the next field they had a much clearer view. The ground was flat, stretching away to a line of trees that marked the banks of the Meuse. All that country was criss-crossed by long thin wriggling worms, brown worms, that moved sideways instead of forward. The worms were infantry going forward to the assault. Eadie with his glasses could see stretcher bearers, prisoner groups, and isolated men, probably runners, working from front to rear of these lines. There was very little shell fire and no indication of machine gun resistance to the advancing lines. This would indicate that the front was some distance away.

"I don't know where we are," muttered Eadie, "and if we're in some strange division's stamping ground we're likely to have trouble with the M. P.'s before we get out."

"Let's get to them trucks," said Jake, "and we'll take care o' the M. P.'s when we see 'em. They never bothered me a hell of a lot yet."

"Those trucks haven't moved an inch since we first saw them," observed Eadie. "There's something phony. I hope they won't be full of stiffs. I saw a wagon train once that had been caught by a barrage. That's one of the scars I'll take to my grave that you were beefing about a little while ago."

When they came down to the road the two saw the reason for the stoppage of the trucks. There was a ration dump, a pile of boxes, quarters of beef, and a

mountain of bread. The road, a jumbled mass of brownish white stone ended abruptly at the dump. Farther on toward the enemy, picks clanked, and shovels thudded. A grunting, toiling mass of men in undershirts, heedless of the rain and the biting wind, were working frantically to extend the road still farther. They dug and tore and a steady flow of other men came up to them from a ruined town down the next slope. These men carried blankets, they shoved carts, even an old rolling kitchen with the top of the stove gone. They lugged boxes in their arms. The town was being transported bodily to the road, and of the stones of its houses a new roadbed was being formed. It is surprising how quickly Nature destroys the work of man. No traffic had traveled that road for four years and the only trace of it now was in the hardness of the soil the men had to turn up.

"Those are engineers," said Eadie, nodding at the gasping, shirted men. "They've been at that pleasant job all night, I'll bet. They claim the engineers are the highest branch of the army. Well, I'm content with one of the lower ones."

"You an' me both," agreed Jake. "Where does truck drivers rank?"

Jake had been prompted to this inquiry by a wrestling knot of men. The truck train came up to the ration dump and then stopped. Far out of sight the long line of elephant-like shapes was immovable but not silent. Drivers and orderlies expressed their feelings pungently. And in the foreground the knot of men wrestled. There was a sort of circle built there, so that a truck could turn around, after unloading. The road was not wide enough for two streams of traffic, but it was intended that the returning trucks could have one wheel on the hard surface, and being empty they ought to be able to get out with the other wheel in the field. Many had, as a long

ribbon of ruts testified. One, however, at just that point in the turn where it was squarely across the road, had evidently developed intestinal trouble. It was not bogged, for all four wheels were on the road, but it seemed to be immovable. The crowd of men about it ceased to peer into its motor and ran to the rear to shove. No action. Again they adjourned to the motor. No action. They all went under the truck like bugs under a stone. No action. There was an officer there who raved and raved.

"He ain't much good," said Jake. "He just keeps sayin' the same thing over an' over. We had a little looey in the supply company that could speak to a truck. Boy, when he started we watched out that there was no gasoline lyin' around open."

More and more men kept arriving from down the column, each to add profane advice, but the truck still sat calmly in the road. The loaded trucks dared not leave the safety of the broken stone roadbed, for once they got a wheel in the mud, heavily laden as they were, they would bog to the axles. Up the road, pick, shovel, and rock hammer clattered ceaselessly.

Another officer appeared, wading along in the mud beside the road. This one made no remarks. He went up to the stalled truck, looked at its motor, went around and peered into the back, and then sent two men scurrying back along the column. He himself went up the road and conversed with the engineer officer. The clink of the hammers ceased suddenly and the officer reappeared leading a hundred or so engineers, to meet the two men he had sent away, who had come back staggering under a load of rope.

The officer who swore regarded these preparations with astonishment. "Hey, what's coming off here?" he demanded.

"I've got a car back there," said the officer with the rope. "I'd kind of like to get through here some time."

"Well, we'll let you through just as soon as these idiots find out what's the matter with this truck. The guts of it came apart somewhere so that we can't move it backward or forward."

"I can move it for you," replied the other calmly. "Just watch."

The engineers began to spread out, the hood was removed from the truck, and some other men, in response to a few short commands crawled under the truck and then were seen to throw ropes from the other side. More ropes were brought, fastened to the far side of the truck, and thrown across the body. The ends of these ropes were carried into the field and the engineers tailed out on them.

"Whoa!" cried the swearing officer, "you're going to upset that truck!"

"Ah!" replied the other officer.

The ropes were fast, the engineers were set, the calm officer blew his whistle.

"Yeh!" cried the engineers, heaving on the ropes. The truck creaked.

"Yoh!" they cried again. The wheels left the ground.

"YOH!" Up went the wheels, over crashed the truck, and the men, running hard, jerked the body clear of the road and into the mud, where it rested with its four wheels helplessly in air and bled oil and rusty water. The truck drivers all ran back to their trucks, the engineers filed slowly away to their picks, shovels, and hammers and the truck column roared with the sound of motors being speeded up again.

"You've ruined that truck," cried the officer who had sworn, "and you'll have to be responsible for it. These

trucks are under my charge and if you come ranking in here taking things out of my hands you'll have to bear the consequences."

"There are twenty thousand men up there waiting to be fed," replied the calm officer. "I'd ruin fifty trucks like that and fifty men like you to get their food to them."

"You'll hear from this!" said the swearing officer. The other made no answer, but went back along the already moving column.

"End o' the first act," commented Jake. "When that next truck is unloaded let's you an' me tumble into it. I can't figure out yet why we had to stay up in the rain all night and not go back when I said. We're doin' now what we would have done then."

"You don't get the idea," said Eadie. "We were still on duty last night. This morning everything is lost, our relief hasn't shown up, and I reported to some general officer. Well, he gave me a message and we go out. We had to have an alibi to go and as soon as we got it, outside!"

They went down to the pile of boxes, quarters of beef and loaves of bread where the first truck in the line had come up and was being unloaded. The fields were crowded here, prisoners trudging stolidly, men laying wire, stretcher bearers going back loaded and forward light, runners, and drifters, men whose mission if any was not apparent at first sight. Many of this concourse of pedestrians stopped and looked at the ration dump. They had the air of wolves about a dying buffalo. Eadie and Jake joined the circle. There was a man, a sergeant, who walked around and around the boxes, looking at the circle of men with hostile eyes. No one said a word. Once in a while a man would bend down, the watchful sergeant would run to that part of the circle, and all the other men would swing a step closer. Cases

of jam had become unheaded, perhaps by the journey in the truck or by being thrown to the ground. The men about the dump would circle around until one such case was located and then, the sergeant's attention attracted elsewhere, it was but a second's work to transfer a can from the case to an overcoat pocket. The first truck went away, the second also, and the third and fourth, yet Jake and Eadie still lingered. Eadie had three cans of grapelade now, and Jake a bulging pocket full of chewing tobacco. There was a case of Red Cross supplies, sweaters and stockings probably and Eadie wanted one, but the case was intact, and it was going to be difficult to get at its contents. The dump kept growing bigger and bigger, and all the more difficult to guard. The crowd also grew bolder. Quarters of beef were going now, bread in bagsful, whole cases of jam. There were fifty kitchens within a kilometer and every one had news of this dump and had sent over its most expert thieves. The sergeant who was guarding was nearly out of his mind. While he tore a carton of Bull Durham from a man's arms, a hind quarter of beef and a dozen loaves of bread would go from somewhere else.

"Come on," said Jake finally, "I'm gettin' cold. Let's get home. There's only one truck left and I don't want to have to walk all the way back."

Eadie, sighing at the thought of a warm sweater that he would not have, turned and started slowly toward the road, where he and Jake would have the best chance of hopping the truck as it made the turn and started back. Eadie had no idea of where he was, but he hoped that he would come upon some elements, either of his own or the division to which he had been attached, and from these he could learn the location of his battery. The plan had been for the relief to tell him the location, but he had seen no relief. The prospect of hunting a battery in

this crowded section of the battlefield was not pleasing. If the police once got him all would be lost, for he had nothing to show his authority for wandering, and verbal excuses were of no avail whatsoever.

This last thought was chilling, but Eadie felt a sensation of discomfort that arose from some other cause. What was it? He looked around and suddenly discovered an officer, and this officer was looking fixedly at him. There was hostility in the officer's eyes.

"What the hell is eating him?" thought the sergeant. His "borrowed" pistol was in his holster under slicker and overcoat and its owner was dead anyway. The major's fieldglasses were out of sight behind Eadie's gas mask. His overcoat and slicker were his own and all his clothing was in accordance with existing regulations.

"Who's that guy?" asked Eadie going close to Jake and muttering under his breath. "That shavey there that's giving us the mean once over."

"Now where have I seen that mug?" mused Jake.

"He does look familiar," agreed Eadie. "Look, now, don't see him. Just walk right across the road and start back along the ruts. We can hop the truck anywhere along here. Damn if I haven't seen him somewhere, but I haven't pinched anything from an officer since we were on the Marne."

"I know him, by God!" cried Jake. "It's that shavey Connor. Some one left him on our doorstep at Mandres."

"Connor!" gasped Eadie. "He's the man that lost all our transport at Saint Mihiel. I haven't seen him since. He told me to take off my wound stripe, too. Well, he hasn't got anything on us."

The officer began to advance upon the two men, his face scowling and his mouth set grimly. Eadie and Jake fixed their eyes innocently on the distant hills and walked across the road. They heard the grate of hobnails on

stone and knew that the officer had moved toward them.

"Here, you two," barked a voice, "where are you going? Halt there, goddamn it!"

They halted and the officer came up. His mouth was pouting and his face had all the expression of a spoiled naughty child.

"What are you two men doing here?" the officer continued. "You're skulking, don't deny it. I saw you with my own eyes. Cringing down here and plundering and stealing. I've been watching you. I know you. You're the sergeant with the fake wound stripe and you're the drunken driver I put under arrest at Royameix."

The two men, having nothing to say, said it. They knew they had but to let the lieutenant exhaust the vials of his wrath and they could go their way in peace.

"You two will stay with me," went on the officer. "I'll keep my eye on you. I'm going to prefer charges against you when I get back."

"Sir," said Eadie, "we've just come off duty. We've been on liaison with the infantry and we're going back with a message."

"What's the message?" asked the officer. "Show it to me."

"Well, sir, it's a verbal one."

"What is it?"

"Sir, the artillery is requested to fire on Montfaucon."

The officer gave a harsh laugh. "I suppose they're to use high explosive, gas, and shrapnel," he sneered. "Couldn't you think up a better one?"

"That's the one the general gave us," said Eadie quietly, "and we're going to deliver it."

The officer's brows came together and his lip pouted more than ever.

"Oh, Harvey! Step up here a minute, will you?"

A man detached himself from a group down the road

and this man came up to the sergeant and Jake. It was another officer. "I want you to hear this, Harvey," said Lieutenant Connor. He turned again to Eadie. "You will accompany me," he said coldly and clearly, "you and this other man. I order you to assist me. I believe you are skulking and I mean to keep you under surveillance until I can turn you over to the authorities for investigation. Will you come peaceably or not?"

The other officer, Harvey, looked nervously at Connor and more nervously at Eadie and Jake. His eyes shifted here and there and he looked anything but comfortable. As for Eadie, he felt a little sick. There was nothing that he and Jake could do. Connor had a witness and Eadie wasn't sure but what Connor could shoot him on the spot if he refused to go with him. Complaint could of course be made once Eadie returned to his battery, but that would avail nothing now. Jake said nothing. Eadie was the sergeant and it was up to him. The other officer muttered something about being in a hurry.

"Well, are you coming?" asked Connor.

"There's nothing else we can do," replied Eadie.

"Sir!" barked Connor. Eadie remained mute.

"Sullen devil, that," remarked Connor, turning to the other officer. He led the way down the road a little way. Three enlisted men stood up as he approached. They were wet, plastered with mud, their eyes haggard. Each one had two huge coils of telephone wire across his shoulders.

"Each of you take two coils of wire," directed the officer to Jake and Eadie, "and follow me. I wouldn't try to run off. That's a little friendly advice. March in the rear, Harvey, and keep an eye on them."

The men, laden with the wire, began to stumble along past where the engineers dug up roots and pounded big stones into little ones.

"Eadie," whispered Jake, "you think we're goin' up near the front?"

"Sure are," said Eadie grimly.

"Then, by God, I know a name that's goin' to be in the next casualty list an' it ain't mine, neither!"

"Now don't go shooting that officer," said Eadie. "That's not the thing. I won't have it." He walked a way in silence. "A better way would be to wait until he's asleep and then we'll tie him to his bunk with a little of this wire, trickle some gasoline over him, then you and I snap cigarette butts at him until we set him alight."

"Man!" exclaimed Jake. "Where do you get your ideas? I wish to Christ I was educated. Ever since I met you I been sorry I never finished grammar school."

"What outfit you guys out of?" asked one of the other men. He was tall and thin, carried neither rifle nor pistol and his slicker was thick with mud. He groaned beneath the weight of two huge coils of wire.

"Seventy-ninth Field," answered Eadie. "Where are you from, the same?"

"We belong to the Signal Corps," said the tall wire stringer, "attached to an' formin' part of the rootin' tootin' Third Field Artillery Brigade."

"You guys was too easy!" interrupted another wire stringer. "Whyncha tell him to pound sand?"

"How the hell could they?" hotly demanded the tall man. "Didn't he have 'em by the nose? Direct disobedience an' the other shavey for a witness. In the face o' the enemy, too. Man, I know all about military law. It's tough chewin'. I was a witness once on a court martial down at Camp Greene."

"Yuh, but all he wanted 'em for was to lug wire!" protested the other man.

"What's all this?" demanded Eadie. "What are you two chewing the fat about?"

"Huh!" grunted the tall man. "Yuh see us? We're the last of a detail of ten. The reason we're the last is because we wasn't quick enough an' now we're up so far it ain't no use."

All the other men began to explain at once just how low, how unspeakable, how ripe for death by slow torture Lieutenant Connor was. They told how the detail had shrunk, one man diving into a dugout, another ducking into a ruined house, a third jumping a truck, others mingling with passing troops, and as soon as Connor discovered a man's absence, the others would be turned about and taken back to the scene. The only result of the search would be the finding of the man's wire which he had promptly abandoned. The time finally arrived when the men had respectfully pointed out to Connor that they could no longer continue the march unless they had assistance in carrying the wire, since each man was laden with a double and even treble load.

"An' about then," observed Jake, "his eagle eye fell on us."

"You said it!" agreed the others.

"Who's the other?" asked Eadie, indicating the younger officer.

"Name's Harvey. He ain't a bad sort, but Connor ranks him. He was to be observer an' Connor was to lay the wire. Well, I'm bettin' Mr. Harvey takes his foot in his hand an' goes away like the rest o' the boys."

"That's what you oughta done," observed a muddy stringer. "So soon as you seen him lookin' at you or even sooner, you oughta squattered to hell across them fields as tight as you could go."

"We couldn't," said Eadie. "He knows us. He's one of A battery's officers and we're out of that battery."

"Is that where he blew in from?" muttered the others.

"Well, he's been keepin' close to the cellar entrance o' the first battalion P. C. since yesterday A.M."

They walked on a way in silence, leaving the road and striking off across the fields. Shells bloomed into great flowers of black and yellow smoke and the distant rattling of machine guns became every minute clearer and clearer. Connor led the way, asking directions of walking-wounded they passed from time to time, and finally they entered a small grove of woods, where the brush was so thick they were forced to go in single file. Eadie walked with bowed head, shifting the wire from one shoulder to the other. He was terribly tired, and was beginning to be hungry again. He was mad. His mind held no other thought. He was just plain mad. And when he got back to the battery he was certainly going to turn this Connor person in.

Suddenly a bend in the path brought Eadie into the presence of a great many drawn-faced, muddy men. Connor was there, and Harvey, and a number of other officers, also many doughboys with bayoneted rifles. There were some wounded, too. It did not need Eadie's front line experience to see that these men had recently been fighting, and hard. Some were cleaning their rifles, others were inspecting their gas-masks, or sadly trying to piece together their torn clothes and puttees. Connor was already in conversation with one of the officers.

"It's useless to go any farther," Eadie heard one of the new officers say.

"But is there any one up there?" asked Connor.

The officers all looked at each other. "Well, we don't know," said one. "There was an order from the brigade to retire. It doesn't seem possible that we could have had so many casualties in such a short space of time. The chances are that there are still a couple of companies up there that haven't got brains enough to come out."

"In that case," said Connor, "we'll be on our way."

"Whoa," cried all in one breath. Three or four officers and half a dozen enlisted men began to explain to Connor that it was impossible to go any farther. That just beyond the woods was a stretch of open country under direct observation, not only from a ridge in front, but from the hills on the east bank of the Meuse. Eadie and Jake thankfully put down their coils of wire and sat on them, but they reckoned without their officer.

"I have orders," said Connor, "to lay this wire to the advanced units so they can ask for artillery fire when they want it, and so that they can direct the fire upon anything they please. Aeroplanes can't see because of the fog, and balloons get shot down as soon as they go up, so wire communication is necessary and essential."

"Well, don't be in a rush," spoke up one of the officers. "If there is any one in front of us they will be back here pretty soon. There's no use laying wire and then pulling it up again. You'd only get half way out and meet them coming back."

"That's right," spoke up another. "Orders came out to fall back to these woods until nightfall. Naturally some of the outfits will take more time than the others, but they will all be back here within an hour or so."

Connor seemed to hesitate. "What do you think, Harvey?" asked he, turning around. No answer.

"Harvey," cried Lieutenant Connor again. He looked here and there. There were bushes, their leaves dripping rain, wet tree trunks with water trickling down their sides, a stump with that curious cactus-like effect that a bursting shell gives to a tree. A group of infantrymen were parceling out an O. D. shirt for cleaning rags. Another cleaned a machine gun under cover of a shelter-half. No sign of Mr. Harvey. Perhaps he had stepped back to speak to one of the wire-stringers. Yes, that must be

it. Connor strode back along the muddy cowpath, past Jake and Eadie to the bush that hid the turn. On the other side of the bush was a further vista of wet woods and muddy path. There was no Mr. Harvey and there were no wire-stringers. Just beyond the bush on the ground were six large coils of telephone wire.

Lieutenant Connor went back to Jake and Eadie with his lip pouting more than ever. The two latter sat on their coils of wire with faces free of guile. Jake chewed tobacco placidly and looked off into the woods, while Eadie scraped away at the mud on his puttees with a chip.

"Do you know where Mr. Harvey is?" asked Connor.

"No, sir," replied Eadie.

Connor was about to say something more, but as he glanced toward the group of officers with whom he had been talking he saw that they were grinning broadly. Many of the infantry had stopped work and were regarding Lieutenant Connor with amusement. The lieutenant's lip came out another quarter of an inch.

"Pick up your wire, you two," said he, "and follow me."

With never a glance to right or left, he stalked forward. As he passed the group of officers a gray-haired man stepped out and took his arm, walking along beside him. "Listen," said this officer in an undertone, "you told Harvey that these two men were a couple of hard tickets. You've been cursing them all the morning. What do you suppose they'll do to you when you get up there in the woods with them alone? You'd better stay here with us for a half hour or so."

Beside the path a tarpaulin was spread on the ground and over it another was stretched to form a sort of tent. A dozen or so telephone wires went under this tent, each with a white tag telling from whence it came. Connor,

without replying to the other officer, bent down and looked into the tent. "Have you got a switchboard in there?" he asked. "Good. Hook on the end of this wire. I'm going to take the other end up to the advance units."

"Don't be a fool," said the officer. "The advanced units are all falling back. Harvey'll be back in a minute or two himself. He's just gone for a little walk."

"To hell with Harvey and you, too," replied Lieutenant Connor. The older officer went away without answering.

The wire was hooked on and the three men started forward through the woods, Jake unrolling his coil behind him. They passed a machine gun, an isolated sentry, and then in a step or two, came to the edge of the woods and saw before them a long stretch of hill and meadow that faded out of sight behind drifting curtains of rain.

Here they halted. Lieutenant Connor put down his own wire and looked soberly enough at the field in front of them. It was deserted, but that was no sign that hostile eyes were not watching it. There was a lot of action in that waste of wood and meadow. A man had but to close his eyes to imagine himself at home in a busy section of a great city. There was a continuous rattle as of heavy vehicles over cobblestones, an endless stream of them, some moving swiftly, others at a deliberate walk. Overhead was the rush and roar of the elevated, a train moaning out of the distance and clattering by every minute. Occasionally one heard the caw of a klaxon, as though it were in the next block, and then many more would answer it, like a flock of crows in a cornfield, or a crowd of angry chauffeurs delayed by a traffic policeman. What a shock to open the eyes again on lonely field, and far-away woods, and the slanting rain, and never a sign of road or house or man!

There was a sudden crackle from the underbrush that made the three men jump.

"There's a gun in there!" cried the lieutenant. He took two steps off the path and there, in a depression of the ground, were two men, covered with a shelter half, from one end of which their helmets protruded and from the other end a thin black rod, a rod that vibrated and coughed and emitted a light blue haze.

"Shut off that gun!" shouted the officer. The men paid him no heed, but the clip running through at that second the gun stopped perforce and the officer could make himself heard. "What are you shooting at?" he cried.

"Them woods," replied the gunner over his shoulder.

"Are there boche in those woods?" asked Connor.

"We ain't studyin' whether there are or not," answered the gunner. "We got to keep warm, anyway."

"Stop firing!" said Connor crisply. "You've no right to waste ammunition to warm yourselves. I'll see that your unit commander knows of this. Where is the P. C. here?"

"There ain't none," said the gunner sullenly. "There's a line o' guns along the woods here with orders to keep up a fire across the field so the boche can't form for no attack. The P. C. is back at the telephone central."

"You aren't shooting at the field; you said you were shooting at the woods."

"Well, there's troops over there that way," replied the gunner.

"Oh, God!" groaned Eadie. He watched the lieutenant turn and leap through the dripping brush to a place where he could survey the field carefully. The sergeant thought of the time he had shut his eyes and imagined himself in a great city. The rattling vehicles were machine guns, the elevated trains shells, and the clamoring auto horns gas warnings. The fields might look deserted and the woods lonely, but there were men there, enough to popu-

late any great city, two millions of men, and every one of them equipped to kill his fellow.

"Come on," whispered Jake, "let's you an' me duck now. We can jump into the brush and be gone. He ain't lookin', he's gawkin' at the field."

"Naw," objected Eadie sadly, "he knows who we are. Those other birds were foolish to pull out. It'll be their neck if he gets back and turns them in."

"I've been thinking it's going to be our neck, too, when we get back. The infantry sure made a big advance during the night. We must be a mile or more farther north than we were when we left the lines last night. Suppose we'd gone back and reported the front line at such a place and it was a couple or three miles farther north! Boy, the Old Man would have had a rush of words to the mouth!"

"Let's go another clip, Joe," said the machine gunner. Joe accordingly inserted the clip and when its length had clattered through the gun, the two men in the hole sighed luxuriously.

"What's all the comfort about?" asked Eadie.

The machine gunners grinned. They were absolutely hidden in their hole, only their necks protruding from the shelter half.

"We got our shelter half set up around the gun," said the loader, "an' when it gets chilly we just let a clip go and the barrel heats up under the tent. It's got steam heat stopped a mile. An air-cooled gun ain't so bad in the winter time."

"Boy," agreed the gunner, "let Davey do his damnedest. We got a system here we're gonna get a patent on when the war is over. Rain an' snow ain't nothin' to us. Lookit, you better get a doctor for that looey of yours; he's clean off his nut. If it wasn't so comfortable in this hole I'd get out and give him a stomach full o' teeth.

You could be witnesses he went bugs an' tried to kill us."

"He's harmless," said Jake. "He ain't got nothin' the matter with him except he was born with a overgrowth o' bone in the head an' he ain't been able to get shut of it since."

The conversation ended then, for the lieutenant came back.

"Pick up your wire, you men," he said. "There are troops out there, they've got a blinker going." All craned their necks and, sure enough, on the far side of the field was a pale light that winked and flickered in the dots and dashes of the Morse code. There were troops out there with a portable battery and a signaling lamp and they were sending back details of their position.

"Come on!" said the lieutenant. "Where's that sergeant?"

"Here!" answered Eadie. He came crashing through the brush from a short distance away, stowing something in his slicker pocket.

"What's that?" barked the officer.

"I picked up a couple of cans of beans and some canned coffee over there," explained Eadie. "I saw a rifle sticking up butt foremost and thought there might be a little eating matter around." He nodded in the direction from which he had come, where several rifle butts showed above the bushes. The bodies of men who fall in wheat or high brush are so marked, so that the burying detail can find them.

"Do you mean to say you plundered some bodies for that food?" cried the officer.

"Why, no. It was in his haversack and——"

"Put it down!"

"—they'd taken off his pack to see how bad he was hit. I wouldn't touch a stiff for a cartload of canned beans."

"Put it down!"

Eadie dropped the can and fished out two more from his pockets, which he also dropped. The machine gunner reached a long arm from his pit and gathered them in.

"Tie your wire onto the other end of that man's coil and go ahead. Only take one coil apiece," directed the officer. Then he led the way to the edge of the field.

Crossing that field was a lot like taking a cold bath, the worst part of it was getting in. Eadie was to lead, uncoiling his wire, and Jake, whose coil was nearly gone, was to follow. Last of all came the officer with another coil. The three of them lay down and wriggled out into the wet grass, Eadie pushing his coil of wire ahead of him, and then turning over and dragging it after him as he shoved himself along the ground with his heels. The collar of his slicker acted as a plow and mud, bits of grass and water worked down his neck. The coil of wire caught in depressions of the ground, it became tangled and kinked, but Eadie could not sit up to straighten it out. They had scarcely left the woods when they crawled along in the shelter of a very low fold in the ground, a fold not two feet high. Dirt had blown from the top of this fold into Eadie's eye. It was a steel wind that had blown that dirt, and for that reason Eadie kept very close to the ground. The enemy were evidently in such a position that they could not sweep the surface of the ground with their bullets, but anywhere between the woods and the men who had flashed the blinker there might be a zone where the bullets skipped along about six inches from the grass. Though the chances for arrival in such a zone were very good, the wire detail kept on. Eadie's blood boiled at the thought of the lieutenant and the way he and Jake had been tricked into carrying the wire. He raged and swore to himself and forgot his fatigue re-

hearsing the complaint he was going to make when he got back to the battery.

From time to time, when a shell hole or a wrinkle of ground gave them the opportunity, the men would take a cautious survey and, having secured their bearings, they would go on again. They had about six hundred yards to go from the woods, six hundred yards of wet grass, shell holes, and mud. The place was strewn with blankets, packs, and empty bandoliers, but they passed no bodies.

"Halt!"

The three crawling men complied. A far-away voice had called to them and they waited to see what the voice would say next. Meanwhile they would stay halted, for the unseen challenger might have weak nerves and a machine gun with a hair trigger.

"We're Americans!" called Eadie finally, when the unseen man had made no further remarks.

"Come in," called a new voice. "Keep your hands where we can see them. Swing to your right a little way and you'll find a ditch."

Eadie rolled over, scrambled a little way and sure enough found a deep ditch into which he could roll and stand upright. Jake joined him and then the lieutenant. They moved cautiously along the ditch and found themselves confronted by half a dozen unshaven doughboys with fixed bayonets.

"Where the hell do you guys think you're goin'?" asked one of the unshaven.

"Enough of that!" snapped Lieutenant Connor. "I'm an officer."

"Oh, he's an officer," said another unshaven. "Well, take 'em all up to the lootenant. Just leave that wire here, buddie."

Eadie dropped his wire and, escorted by four of the six unshaven, he and Jake and the lieutenant followed

the ditch until they came to a road, into which they turned.

This road went over a hill as a surcingle goes over a saddle, and two banks, one like the pommel and the other the cantle, stuck up on either side. The field that the men had crossed was a plateau, for the road plunged away on one side to the valley of the Meuse, and took an abrupt drop to a dry water course on the other side. The saddle itself was a hundred yards or so long and this hundred yards was filled with men, all busy digging themselves holes in the side hill. There was a dressing station, a row of clay-faced wounded, and another row of men covered with blankets. Eadie, unable to restrain the temptation to look, glanced at the shoes that stuck out from under the blankets. There were a dozen pairs of shoes and only two were hobnailed.

Suddenly the guards halted and Eadie found himself confronting a soldier who sat against the bank, his feet braced on the edge of the ditch. This man was shaved, but his once expensive uniform was ragged and stained with yellow mud. He wore boots, one of which was garnished with a lump of mud on the heel that a second look showed was a spur. There were little straggling threads of silk on collar and shoulder strap where the ornaments and rank insignia had been cut away. There was a huge tear in one breeches leg, through which a naked thigh and a nasty bleeding wire-cut could be seen.

"What's this?" asked the man, looking up at the newcomers.

"They was sneakin' across the field an' we brung 'em in," explained the guard.

"Well?"

"We're a wire layin' detail from the artillery," explained Lieutenant Connor. "I have been directed to find

the foremost infantry unit of the Fourth Division. I assume this is it. If it isn't, I must go on."

"The Fourth Division?" cried Eadie. "We don't belong to the Fourth, we belong to the Third. Why, the Fourth have got artillery of their own! The 77th is with the Fourth, our old brother outfit from Ethan Allen!" The sergeant paused, for the eyes of all were on him, especially those of the man on the bank.

"Would you like to see a doctor?" asked the latter. "If you're feeling jumpy or seeing double or anything——"

Eadie shook his head. Even as he spoke several things had become clear to him. The infantry that he and Jake had been with the day before had not made a tremendous advance, but he and Jake had again wandered across the line into the right division's sector, and were now with infantry of that division. Still, the wire stringers had belonged to Eadie's brigade, which would mean that the brigade was now backing up the Fourth instead of their own division. That would also explain why no relief had been sent to Eadie. There had been a switch during the night, and probably Baldy and Short Mack had been rushed out to the new division. Well, they were here now, and must make the best of it.

"So you came in across the field," muttered the ragged officer. "We've tried to get runners through there, but they haven't seemed to be able to make it. Well, what's the answer? You men want to commit suicide or did you come up here for some definite purpose?"

"We've brought up a wire from the information center," replied Lieutenant Connor coldly. He had been thinking more and more that this ragged officer was probably a temporary second lieutenant. No one bought expensive uniforms like that except newly commissioned

officers of the general staff. Hence he, Connor, was preparing to do some heavy ranking.

"You've brought up a wire?" cried the ragged man. "Well, I call that fine work. If I'd known you men were bringing me a wire I'd have let go a few slugs at you myself. This is the first time in twenty-nine years of service that I've been able to draw a free breath and do as I pleased. And you have to bring me up a wire so that the corps can make life miserable for me! What the hell do I want with a wire? I've got a blinker running and that's enough. It only runs one way, that's why I like it. Who knows how to hold this road, me or old Foot in the Grave ten miles back and ninety feet down?"

"Before we discuss the question any further," remarked Connor haughtily, "let's settle the question of rank. I'm a first lieutenant ranking from July 10, 1918. What are you?"

The ragged man's jaw dropped with almost a distinct click. He seemed at a loss for words. He gasped.

"Rank?" finally breathed the ragged man in a husky voice. "Jesus, are they all crazy? Don't worry about rank, lieutenant. When I was a first lieutenant, you weren't born. Go bring me that wire."

One of the men that had come up with Eadie detached himself from the group and in a few minutes appeared with several more, tugging the end of the wire after them. Lieutenant Connor, who had an instrument, attached the end of the wire and after some minutes of cranking and calling "hello," he got a response.

"There you are," said he to the ragged man. "You can talk to them."

"Hello," began the ragged man. "Who's this? Ah, well put me through to Sheridan. Hello, Sheridan? General MacLeod speaking. I'm up here in the woods

with a composite battalion. They belong to every unit in the A. E. F. The rectification of the line was very poorly done and so we were pinched out. I can hold out until night. We've got to have some air by then though. Darkness and all that. I haven't got any machine guns to speak of. Can you hear me?"

The ragged man, who said he was a general, wound the crank of the telephone. He listened, he called into the mouthpiece, and wound the crank again. "I guess it's gone," he remarked. "Well, they know we're alive. The thing that frightens me is that our artillery might take a desire to steamroll this road and with us on it it wouldn't be pleasant. Artillerymen do that some— what the hell is eating you?"

A doughboy, holding a portable pick in his hand, had joined the group. His face was quite white and concerned, and he rendered alternately the hand salute and the rifle salute with his pick. His mouth opened and shut but no words came.

"Speak up!" said the general.

The man gave a dry croak. "Boche!" he said, and pointed with his free hand.

The group all looked in the direction of the place where the road went downhill toward the west. That place had a few seconds before been full of doughboys digging holes, arranging shelter halves over holes already dug or chopping down bushes for camouflage. These had suddenly disappeared and now one could see nothing but a helmet or two, a few rifle barrels and some men prone in the road who were looking at something downhill below them.

"Lieutenant!" said the general quickly and sharply, "you and I are the only officers here. Go down to the other end of the road and take charge. Have every one

stop what he's doing and find cover. Under no consideration let any shooting start. Jump! The rest of you, follow me!"

Eadie, Jake, the men who had guarded them, and two others that he had not noticed before, went hurriedly to the edge of the hill. Here they cautiously looked down.

There was a deep gulch there that ran diagonally across the road, winding away to the southwest. Through this gulch marched a great many German soldiers, rifles slung, full packs, all helmeted with that dark steel hood that looks so much like a coal scuttle. They flowed along the gulch like a stream running uphill, not in any kind of formation, but just as any crowd of men would scramble along over rough ground. Eadie tried to remember something he had learned a long time ago about the number of men in column of fours that would pass a point in a given time. He couldn't remember. Figures were not necessary, anyway. There were a whole lot of Germans there, and that was enough.

"You," said the general in an undertone to the two infantrymen, "jump out and tell those men in the ditch not to start any shooting. Those Germans are going up that gulch to pull off a flank attack on our lines farther back. We mustn't let them know we're here. They outnumber us about five to one or more anyway. Sergeant Fletcher, run back to the blinker and send, 'Enemy in large numbers moving southwest. Watch left.' Go on, you others, get all those riflemen back here. You there, you man with the mustache, do you know where the machine gun is up there? Jump up and tell 'em not to fire on their lives!"

The men turned to go, but there was a sudden crackle of rifle fire and a straggling burst of yelling from down the road. The Germans below halted instantly and stood listening. Two patrols detached themselves from the

mob and began to climb the hill toward the Americans. The machine gun that was on the upper edge of the road went into action with a sound like ripping cloth, the two patrols melted into lumps of motionless gray, and men went down in the tightly massed troops below, beaten down by the machine gun fire as grass is by water from a hose. The sight was too much for the concealed American infantry. The place began to sizzle with rifle fire.

"Ah, damn the luck!" muttered the general. "Now they're off." He bit his lip a moment, then turned to Eadie and Jake. "Is either of you a non-com?" he asked.

"I'm a sergeant, sir," replied Eadie.

"Good. We're in for a red hot fight. I'm going back to get the wounded out of the road and to see how things are there. Stay here and when my messengers come back don't let them go away again. I'm leaving you in charge now. Don't let any one start a panic."

The Germans, recovering from the shock of their surprise, unable to retreat, because of the number behind, and unable to go forward because of lack of cover, began to ascend the hill in the face of the American fire. They came on, slowly, creeping up the ditch on both sides of the road, firing their rifles and hurling grenades. Eadie had heard somewhere that the Germans did not know how to shoot, but these he now faced were an exception to the rule. Their rifle fire was hot and accurate, and the explosions of the grenades were unpleasantly close. Mud flew, spattering in the men's faces, bullets clicked on stones, bits of turf leaped and spun in air. The Germans came nearer, almost without casualties, crawling, creeping, showing themselves only to fire. The Americans, firing downhill and wildly excited, were firing too high, but as the range became more and more pointblank their bullets began to find marks and the advance slowed. It slowed but it continued, nevertheless.

Eadie, on his stomach in the middle of the road, watched the enemy come nearer and nearer. A hot time, this, and like all hot times, it had come suddenly and unexpectedly. An explosion at his ear nearly split the drum.

"Who the hell was that?" cried the sergeant, looking around with his hand at his ear.

"Me," said Jake. "I didn't mean to hold the old gat so near you. Lookit the squareheads fixin' their bayonets. They're gonna rush us! Git out your gun, Eadie, unless you want 'em to come up here an' shake hands with us!"

It was true, the Germans were dangerously near. They clustered on the hillside like bees, the ditch crawled with them, they had already taken some prisoners and were herding them out of sight. Eadie drew his pistol and pointing it in the general direction of the Germans, fired away a clip. It took him a long time to reload, for his hands shook, he dropped the fresh clip in the mud, and then tried to insert it wrong side to. His breath came in gasps as though he had been running a long time and his heart beat with such speed that he seemed to be suffocating. The enemy were closer than ever, he could even see their faces now. There was one in particular, a man with a blond mustache. This one was in the right hand ditch and showed himself from time to time to throw a grenade. Eadie aimed at him and fired. A few seconds later the blond man leaped up and a grenade sailed in the sergeant's direction. He did not hear it burst, for he had fired again at the German. He missed by a mile.

"Steady now," muttered Eadie, "steady." He rested both elbows on the road and steadied his right wrist with his left hand. Then he drew a careful bead on where he thought the German would appear the next time. A pause. The German with the blond mustache obligingly put his head and shoulder out of the ditch.

Bang!

"I hit him!" shrieked Eadie. "By God, I hit him!"

There was no doubt of that. The German was slammed back against the bank as by a powerful unseen hammer and he remained there, arms outstretched as though he had been nailed to the ground. One or two men took the time to look curiously at Eadie over their rifle butts, but the greater part paid no attention. The air was full of unintelligible cries and shouts, both in German and English and the men had other things on their minds than to heed them.

The messengers that the general had sent out did not come back. Eadie thought of them now and then, but all the men he could see were intent on killing as many Germans as possible. Probably the messengers, having delivered their messages, had stayed to help wherever they found themselves. Eadie, his pistol ammunition all gone, looked about him for a rifle. There was none near and though he saw several down the road a way, the chances were too good on getting killed if he went down after them. The enemy, he noticed suddenly, was not pushing the advance. It was apparent, as it is to a watcher on the seashore, that the high water mark had been reached. The gray chips from each wave were left a little farther back each time and finally there were no further attempts to climb the hill, but the ditch on each side was still full of Germans and there was no cessation in the roar of machine gun fire.

"Have any of those birds come back?" cried a voice in Eadie's ear. At the same time a freckled hand splashed into the mud and a man lay down by Eadie. The sergeant, looking at him, recognized him as one of those who had been with the general.

"Haven't seen any," said Eadie. "We're holdin' 'em!"

"Have they begun to fall back?"

"No, not yet. They aren't doing any more rushing, though."

"Jesus!" The other man spat in the road. "Ain't this a picnic for a man above grade seventeen to get into! I was detailed to go with that high-flyin' staff bird an' carry his camp chairs an' stuff. I'm a sergeant-major with Brigade H. Q. Figure me doin' it! Boy, there's a jinx on this outfit! Where the hell did that shell shocked lieutenant come from?"

"The one with me?" asked Eadie. "What's he done now, bawled you out for not saluting?"

"Him? Hell, no. But the general told him to go back and not let any shooting take place. They cut loose before he got there, but he soon stopped it. Yessir, he was the man that wasn't going to let it happen again, either. When the general got back there, and the scrap was goin' on like a house afire, this looey has the men all lined up emptyin' their ammunition belts into the road so's they couldn't do any more unauthorized firin'. An' all hell loose at this end o' the road!" The sergeant-major paused and chewed upon a twig. "Boy, we'll get the Medal of Honor out of this fight!" he yelled, "us or our folks."

"There they go!" cried Eadie excitedly. "They're pulling out! We've licked 'em. Goddamn their lousy souls! Look at 'em run!"

"Outta here!" howled the sergeant-major, springing to his feet, "outta here! You men down there, fall back!" He took a whistle from his pocket and blew upon it with lung-bursting force. "Blow your whistle!" he cried to Eadie, "get these guys outta here! The general said the minute they started to go to run like hell ourselves. They're gonna shower down with G. I. cans!"

Eadie's whistle added its shrieking to the others and at last some of the men in the ditch and in holes at the

side of the road began to pay attention. The two non-coms waved their arms frantically and the men began to come in, standing up and climbing hastily out of the ditch or running down the side hill to the road.

"Go back there!" directed the sergeant-major, shoving them along the road. They obeyed, bending almost double to shelter themselves from any stray bullets. This was hardly necessary, for the road was higher than the hill across the gulch, and so was free from any aimed fire, although bullets were continually raking the sides of the banks and sending stones rattling down into the road.

Eadie looked around for Jake as the last of the riflemen skipped down the road. The red-headed man had taken up a sitting position on the bank and was firing a rifle that he had picked up. His bolt worked fast, and his jaws kept time. The light of battle was in his eye. Up would go the rifle to the shoulder, bang! Down it would come, he would masticate furiously, spit, and up would go the rifle again for another shot.

"Jake!" yelled Eadie. It was necessary to climb the slippery bank a way and shake the red-headed man's arm. Jake turned with unseeing eyes.

"Jake! Come on! Get the hell out of here before the barrage!"

"Huh?"

"Come on, Jake! Lay off shooting, the war is over. Come on, we got orders to fade tc hell away out of here!"

Jake's jaw stopped its rapid motions and the gleam in his eye died.

"Man," he muttered. "This ain't no way to do. I was just goin' good!" He arose stiffly, however, slung his rifle, and then the three men, bending low, scuttled down the road after the others. The general was there, ushering the men off the road to the right, that is, northward.

There seemed to be a trench or another road there, what it was Eadie could not quite make out. Some men were hurriedly hauling in Eadie's wire that had been laid up the road, others were arranging a sort of embrasure in the ditch, so that a machine gun could be set up and have a clear field of fire down the road, yet be protected from shells striking near at hand. The wounded had all disappeared, but the line of dead with their boots sticking out from under the blankets, still remained. Eadie looked again at those boots. The hob-nailed ones were not remarkable, but there were some that had bare soles with a chain around the arch, but the most had those ridges of rubber that the British invented and call military soles.

"Lesson in duties of liaison detail," remarked Jake, sensing Eadie's thought. "What's them with no hob-nails? Officers. How come they got killed? They got between some doughboy an' the skyline. How come they got all carried in here 'stead o' bein' left in the fields like the bucks? So's the fightin' democrats wouldn't steal the gold outta their teeth. Man, there's damn few officers fills an unknown grave. They carry too many francs in their jeans."

"How come all these officers with their toes in the air?" asked Eadie, turning to the sergeant-major.

"Battalion staff and company commanders," said the sergeant-major. "The order come up to retire to rectify the lines, the division on the left havin' left our flank flyin' in the breeze for about five miles. The battalion commander has in his captains to explain the retirement to 'em. Down comes a shell, a mean Austrian 88, one of them that comes zipp and you're dead. Well, it slammed right into 'em and when the smoke cleared their folks was all ten thousand bucks to the good. Me an' the general an' Adolph was out in the field, or we'd have got ours, too."

"And this bunch is what is left of the battalion?" asked Eadie, indicating the hurrying men, most of whom had now disappeared in the ditch to the northward.

"I guess so," answered the other. "They been straggling in all night. There's squads left of platoons and platoons of companies, commanded by anything from sergeants to privates first-class. The general's been runnin' around all night straightenin' 'em out. He ain't a fightin' general. He come up from G. H. Q. to make an inspection and see how many officers he could bust and now he's got the bull by the tail. Serves him right for makin' inspections at the front."

"Whaddyuh mean bull by the tail?" asked Jake.

"Why, he's took command o' this madhouse an' he's got to see it through till some one comes up here and pulls us out. We can't get out across the field, because the boche got it under observation. An' both flanks is in air for miles. Well, I'll give you my guess. We'll last till night and then we'll get a summons to surrender, which we won't do, and then the boche will come in here in the dark and drive the livin' tar out of us. Wait an' see."

"These are the two men," said an unpleasant voice, "these two. I just wanted to point them out to you since they won't be under my eye any more."

Eadie and Jake turned. Lieutenant Connor stood there, pointing them out to the general.

"I found them skulking," went on the lieutenant, "and they've several times tried to get away from me. I'm told they made threats about killing me when they got me alone."

"They're a tough looking pair," remarked the general, a slight twinkle in his eye, "but then we all look a little the worse for wear. Civilization's no deeper than a shave

and a little touch of the pressing iron, anyway. I'll keep my eye on 'em."

The lieutenant favored the two with one last cold look and then going over to the machine gun embrasure, got into it. There were several helmets visible there, and it was plain that the machine gunners had their weapon in readiness.

"I'm leaving it to you, lieutenant," said the general, shaking the other's hand from the edge of the hole. "Keep 'em off my back. We'll keep 'em off yours and our own gang in the woods will keep 'em from crossing to the south."

Chapter VII

THE SUNKEN ROAD

THE moaning cry of soaring shells seeking their prey heralded the arrival of the barrage. The general, Eadie, Jake, the sergeant-major and the few stragglers did not await its arrival, but tore down the road and plunged into the trench or ditch or whatever it was that ran northward. A rolling of kettledrums behind them told them they had not gone too soon.

The ditch Eadie discovered to be a farm road, probably used by some farmer to go from the main road down to a sheep pasturage. It had been cut or worn by generations of usage to a depth of a yard or so and its protective features were added to by the earth banks that lined its sides and served as fences to keep stock from wandering into it. Underfoot it was very muddy and there were ruts there that showed the enemy had appreciated the advantages of the road and had used it recently. In this sunken road, hidden among the bushes that lined it, and the thorny hedge that crowned the top, were the remnants of the battalion. They were packed in there like sheep, and having no officers, nor any one who knew what to do, or where to go, the confusion was terrible. Moreover, they had just come from a hot fight and the growling of the barrage on the road they had just left was not reassuring.

A man wearing a khaki uniform, but not of American pattern, came running up to the general. It needed a second look to tell that this man was French. In the first

place he wore no slicker, in the second, the buttons on his uniform were gold, and in the third place he wore a red cord around his left shoulder. He had a number of little loops of thread over his left breast pocket to suspend medals from.

"General," said the French soldier, "we ain't got no bullets for de odder gun. Anyway, she's broke its piston in t'ree ekal half an' lost one."

"And that leaves how many?"

"One now an' de rudder one what's got de lootenant."

"Sergeant-major, go round up all the non-commissioned officers and bring them here. Wait here a minute. Adolph, we'll want your advice on this thing."

Adolph lighted a cigarette with a briquet and looked calmly around. Eadie regarded him. He noted the row of brisques or service chevrons that the French soldier wore, he noted that he was small, had intensely black eyes and coarse black hair. The collar of his blouse bore no device, but from the khaki uniform and the red cord, the fourragère of the Legion of Honor, this French soldier belonged to the Foreign Legion. Eadie looked at the other's cuff. There was a diagonal stripe of gold braid there.

"Where did you learn to speak English, sergeant?" he asked.

"I never learn," answered Adolph seriously. "I was born wit' it. I come from top Canadaw."

"What are you doing in this crowd?"

"I dunno maself. De boys show me how to lose all ma money shottin' crap an' de officers ask me what kind wine it can get drunk on de soonest. An' when I go to a French P. C., it wants to know why de hell I ain't brung some boxes of cigarette back wit' me."

"You must lead a tough life," remarked Jake. "Ain't it better than bein' up in the lines an' gettin' killed?"

Adolph looked at Jake unblinkingly. "You t'ink dis picnic to brung its lunch basket and sit onder tree?" he asked, nodding toward the road where shells growled, ten growls to the minute. "You wait till night an' see."

The sergeant-major came splashing back along the road leading seven men. The general whistled softly when he saw them, but made no remark.

"All right, men," he said, "and, Adolph, pay attention and if you have any suggestions, be sure to interrupt me. To begin with, I'm going to explain the situation so that you'll know what's going on and what we want to do. This place that we're in is a triangle, two sides of which are formed by gulches and the base by our lines on the woods. We're up in the nose of it. The enemy have appeared on our left and that's the place that we must watch the closest. The right is under fire from the division on that side, although it's a little way back. Our rear is protected because the enemy can't cross the plateau in the face of our troops in the woods, who are only waiting for night to advance and get us out of here. Meanwhile, I want each of you men to take charge of thirty men. Take the first thirty you come to, let them know who you are, talk to them, explain what's going on, tell them that there's nothing to be afraid of as long as they obey orders. Then inspect your thirty men. See how much water they have, if they have any food or not, how much ammunition they have. Keep 'em under cover. I'll be walking up and down and keeping my eye on you all the time."

"Could I ask a question, general?" asked one of the men in a pause.

"Certainly, what is it?"

"Well, sir, what's to prevent them boche from sneakin' up that road where we were and takin' us in the rear?"

"Their own barrage fire."

"But when that stops, sir?"

"I left the other machine gun there in the ditch with an officer and ten men. They can keep the road clear. The second gun I'm going to use as a reserve to run to any threatened point. We won't have any attack anyway, because the enemy have no intention of holding this sector, and they know very well if they take this hill they only lose it to-night when the army advances again. Any more questions? If not, posts. I'll be around in ten minutes to see what dispositions you have made."

There was a droning hum like a huge fly buzzing against a window-pane. Every one flattened himself against the bank, for there was not a man there but knew that that sound heralded the approach of a German plane. It swept over them suddenly, flying low, and it seemed to cast a black shadow that remained even after it had passed. It swooped, circled, went westward, banked around, returned, and then making a circle over the sunken road, flew back the way it had come.

"Never saw us!" muttered some one.

The general looked questioningly at Adolph.

"The boche send him for to see what gum her attack up," said Adolph.

"Did he see us you think?"

"Oh, yes. In two minute, dat barrage she stop on de road an' we hear de mosheen gun. If de boche come t'rough, good. If she don't, dey go back an' she starts its artillery."

"Well, jump out, men," said the general. "Work fast. Shell fire makes a lot of noise, but we've got good cover here. Posts!"

The men went away at a trot, leaving Jake, Eadie, the sergeant-major and Adolph with the general.

"Do you think it's likely we'll be rushed?" asked the general.

Adolph shrugged his shoulders. "Dat depen'," said he. "Bimeby when it gets darker, we go out an' try to catch one two prisoners. If she's a bunch old fellars, dey shell us all night. If she's young ones, just back from Roosha, mebbe she comes in to see us."

"By God!" cried the general. "Adolph, you were right, they've stopped shelling that road!" He looked quickly around. "You telephone men, jump down to the end of the road and get that wire working. Sergeant-major, find out where the blinker is, and see if we can get a place to use it without exposing ourselves."

Eadie, to lighten himself, tore off his slicker and overcoat. His pistol and belt he rolled in his overcoat and then tucked the bundle under a bush. His slicker he put on again.

"Where were you wounded, sergeant?" asked the general, noting Eadie's stripe.

"I was shot in the leg, sir," replied Eadie.

"Fully recovered?"

"Yes, sir. Come on, Jake, let's go."

The two trotted down the path toward the place where they had last seen the wire and the telephone.

"I was wonderin' how long it would take you to snap out of it an' say you was hit," grinned Jake. "It's just as easy to say you was knocked over by a bullet as to say you got a month or so in hospital by mistake. They ain't goin' to make you peel down an' show your scar."

"That's just what I decided," replied Eadie.

"You're learnin'," said Jake, nodding his head sagely. "You got education but sometimes I think you ain't got a hell of a lot of savvy. Most book learned guys are that way."

The telephone they found hung to a tree by its carrying strap and guarded by a sad-eyed infantryman. Eadie ground the crank.

"Hello!" replied a voice at the other end of the wire with a suddenness that was surprising.

"Hello," replied Eadie. "Is this wire working?"

"Sure, why the hell not? Who do you want to talk with?"

"Wait a minute." Eadie sent Jake running for the general, while the infantryman who had guarded the telephone and the sergeant had a cigarette to cheer them. The general was back in a minute and picking up the receiver, asked for a connection.

"That's all, men," he said over his shoulder. The men retired, but they had only taken a few steps when Eadie, whose cigarette had developed a break in the side, paused to lick it down and then light it again. The other two stopped to wait for him and thus they heard the general begin his conversation.

"Yes, I know," said the general into the telephone, "but I'd like to know what you're going to do about it. Water is the main question, water and food. Can you hear me? No, no, no! Water! Water! Get it? We haven't got any water. I've got twenty-two wounded here. Twenty-two. Yes. How about artillery fire? Can you help me any? Now, that's a feeble excuse!"

The three men looked at each other and continued their way. The general had dismissed them so that they would not hear and if he suddenly cut short his conversation and found them listening he might be vexed.

"Whadda we do now?" asked Jake.

"We'll dig ourselfs a hole," said the infantryman. "When in doubt, dig in. If the holes I've dug was to be put end to end they'd make a trench from here to Weehawken." He took off his pack and unslung the spade carried there. "Now I'll find me a hombre that's got a pick an' we'll make out to git underground." He went down the ditch.

"It's handy to know a fellar that's got a spade," observed Jake.

"Want to dig yourself in?" grinned Eadie.

"No," said Jake, "but some of us are liable to need buryin'."

"You want to keep away from shovels," remarked Eadie. "The next worst thing to being buried yourself is a burying detail. We'd better find ourselves a rifle."

For a while great activity reigned in the sunken road. The men were digging themselves fox holes in the side of the bank, the sergeants were inspecting their new platoons and checking up on the amount of water, food and ammunition available. The reports from all were the same. The men had been fighting since early morning of the day before and their water was all gone. What little there was had been commandeered for the wounded. There was no food beyond one or two boxes of hardtack, and this among two hundred men was mockery. There was a fair amount of rifle ammunition, but very little machine gun. The division was equipped with the Hotchkiss and this gun had to have special ammunition. The machine guns had done more firing than the riflemen during the previous day's fighting and had not more than two boxes apiece left. The wounded had been laid aside where the overhang of the bank gave them a little shelter and some medical corps men took charge. Only about six of the twenty-two had stretchers.

The general returned from the telephone and commanding Jake and Eadie to follow him, went up and down, exhorting. The men were cold, hungry, and frightfully tired. Thirty-three hours of fighting is a frightful strain on the system, mental and physical, and it is doubtful if a man that has undergone it is ever the same afterwards.

"Keep your rifles out of the mud," ordered the gen-

eral, "and be sure to make yourselves good shelters. The boche won't attack us, but we're liable to get some shelling during the night. Relief is coming at dark, but they may be some time getting across the field. Every one get his hole dug and try to get some rest. Keep your heads down. Remember we're under observation from the west. Don't let the noise bother you, they aren't shooting at us."

There was a sudden sound, clear cut and distinct. The sound of pick and shovel, and the panting of laboring men stopped. The continuous roll of machine gun fire from the westward, and the American reply to it had become so much a matter of course that the men did not even hear it any more, but this new sound was different. It was close at hand, excited, frantic. It took the listeners but a few seconds to decide what it was. It was the gun on the main road in action and it meant that the enemy was trying to come up that way. Then the hush was broken by a single wild yell, high-pitched, a cry of alarm and terror that made the spine tingle and the scalp creep. From the upper end of the cart path came a hurly-burly of cries, then from the field to the west a hoarse shout.

"Hoch!" and again, "Hoch! Hoch!"

Eadie seized a bush and swung himself up the bank to where he could see through the hedge. An army in gray overcoats and coal scuttle helmets was coming across the field and coming fast. They were not ten yards away and their first grenades barked as Eadie leaped into the ditch again. Things then became confused.

A man's mind is, after all, a simple thing. A rush of differing sensations numbs it and it can hold but one or two impressions. From the time that Eadie leaped from the top of the bank to the ground he had remembered he had no pistol ammunition, that though he had several

times talked vaguely of finding a rifle he had not yet found one. Then his feet landed on the cart path and in recovering his balance his hand lighted on something hard. The Germans came through the hedge, then, bayonets foremost. Eadie dazedly endeavored to parry a vicious thrust with whatever he had picked up. It was a pick and the end of it clawed a German's rifle out of his grasp. Then he and the sergeant clinched.

Eadie had been at grips with many men on different occasions. But this was no wrestling match, nor was it a task like that of putting a violent soldier under restraint, nor yet the rollicking fierceness of café clean-outs. This man wanted to kill him. In just the second before their bodies met, Eadie had seen the other's eyes. They were hard and blue, and hate and bloodlust blazed from them. All the nakedness of a man's soul gone back to primeval savagery looked out. The German's teeth were white and firm, bare to the gums in a snarl of rage. Then their bodies had met. The sergeant kept his head down on the other's shoulder, some vague idea in his mind of protecting his eyes from the other's thumbs, and they made one spin thus. The German was the stronger, that was plain at the first grip, yet Eadie managed to catch his heel behind the other's and bring him to one knee. The German was up instantly, however, but both reeled in the slippery footing. Eadie got one arm free and jabbed for the other's jaw, but the blow lacked force, for the men were too close. At the same moment the German, his arm likewise free, shot up his hand like a striking snake and seized Eadie's throat in a grip of steel.

"Gah!" Thus the sergeant. There was the thud of a blow and Eadie found himself on his back in the mud, on his back, but free. He scrambled to his knees, but the German was rolling about on the ground in the strangest

kind of contortions, jerking backwards all the time, as though he were a crab. Now why—Eadie raised his eyes and saw a doughboy tugging and hauling to free the bayonet that he had plunged into the German's back.

Elsewhere the fight raged as before. The Americans and the enemy were too closely mingled to allow the use of even pistols. It was bayonet, pick, shovel, trench-knife, fists and teeth. No menagerie at feeding time gave vent to any such chorus of snarls and howls as that sunken road. The Germans still poured over the hedge, but their own numbers hampered them. The Americans, their backs against the bank, had only to hew at the gray mass with whatever weapon came to hand. Eadie recovered his pick and swung with it. He chopped at rifles, at bayonets, at heads, feet, hands, arms, backs, shoulders, anything in gray. He swung until his head swam. His breath came in gasps, there was a taste of blood in his throat, his mouth was dry as desert sand. His arms ached and there came a time when it was impossible for him to raise the pick from the ground. It fell finally from his hands and he sank down against the bank exhausted. He had done what he could and now there was nothing to do but wait for death.

Feet tramped up and down, mud splashed, men rolled on the ground, twisted from one bank to the other, fell down, got up, and fell again. Eadie's breath finally returned, his arms grew stronger, the dryness in his mouth disappeared. The fight still boiled and it behooved him to take part in it again. Then it was that his eye discovered a dead doughboy beside him and this man held a rifle loosely in his hands. Eadie took it, threw off the safe, saw that the magazine had cartridges in it and then looked about for a target. Things were much clearer, the fighters were not so thickly clustered now, and the Germans had ceased to come in over the hedge. At the lower

end of the cart track stood two Americans with their hands in the air, but at the upper end stood four Germans in the same attitude. A German was walking calmly up the path from the lower end, a man whose bearing, well fitting uniform, and thin gold shoulder straps proclaimed him an officer. He had a pistol in his hand and motioned with it to Eadie to lay down the rifle. Him Eadie shot at point blank range. Another German turned at the slam of the rifle and fumbled at his belt for a grenade. Eadie shot him, too. Then a rushing, trampling mob poured down the path, and bounding against the high walls and falling into the ditch, destroyed all opportunity for rifle shooting.

It was over. The trampling mob had been a number of Yanks from the upper end of the road who had cleared their sector and come to the aid of their comrades in the lower end. There was still some fighting going on, still a few cries of "Leggo now, Fritz, or I'll push your face in!" and "Get that big kraut! Get him!"

But it was over, nevertheless, and the Americans were still in possession of the sunken cart path. The general, pistol in hand, strode down the road counting the bodies of the slain. There were two and three Germans to every American, but what of that? The Americans had lost two-thirds of their effective strength in killed and disabled. Not a man of the Yanks but what bore the mark of the enemy. The general himself had all the skin removed from the knuckles of both hands and bled from a stab in the forearm. Adolph, trotting in the general's steps, had the side of his face burned black from the discharge of a rifle, the bullet of which had cut the strap of his helmet. Jake appeared, walking side by side with the gloomy doughboy who had guarded the telephone. The doughboy had a bloody nose, which he wiped from time to time with the back of his hand, snuffing the while.

Jake was a wreck. His gas mask was gone entirely, the strap of his helmet dangled in two halves, and his blouse, ripped from collar to waist, gaped wide, showing his barrel of a chest, thick with matted red hair.

"There's the sergeant," cried the gloomy doughboy, "there he is. Are yuh hurted?"

"No," said Eadie dully.

"It was me that socked that hun," said the gloomy man. "I woulda spiked him sooner, only you two done the Highland fling so lively I couldn't see no chance. Then, all of a sudden, sock! I thought my sticker was in him for the rest o' the war."

"Boy," cried Jake, setting his helmet, and trying half-heartedly to tie the ends of the chin strap together, "I ain't had so lively a time since the night I sung the Battle o' the Boyne in a caffy full o' the Twenty-Sixth Division. Sargint, if you'd been born south o' the Line, I'd say you was gettin' rid of your dark blood."

Eadie looked down in astonishment. A long stream of black stained the front of his blouse clear down below the waist. What the hell—there was a long wound in his gas mask and this wound wept black soot. With a quick and apprehensive gesture Eadie seized the major's field glasses that he carried in back of his mask. The leather from the right hand side had been shorn away as by a knife. His gas mask rattled and a tiny flow of charcoal sifted out.

"Soldier," said Eadie, "you rammed that bayonet clear through that jerry and into me. If it hadn't been for that pair of field glasses you'd have spiked me, too. Look at my gas mask. What the hell good will it be now?"

"Yeh, I rammed that sticker into him, that's the truth," agreed the gloomy man. "I was near an hour gettin' it out again."

"Yuh wanta be kinda careful with that damn thing,"

said Jake hotly. "This ain't no second lootenant, he's a sargint. You don't wanta go killin' no sargints!"

"Uhhuh!" agreed the gloomy man. "Well, that was a nice little fight."

Eadie noticed that the doughboy had a brace of German helmets in his right hand and that Jake had about his waist a leather belt with a brass buckle that bore a crown and the device, "Gott Mit Uns." Into this belt was thrust a Mauser pistol and a saw-toothed bayonet with a red and white tassel attached.

"I'll say," muttered Eadie. "There was a time when I thought the party was over and we were licked and all of a sudden it was the boche that were licked."

"Yep," said Jake, "we seen that, too. I ain't above explainin' that when I seen them jerries jumpin' over the hedge, I took my foot in my hand. Enough is enough, an' like I explained, I don't want to get killed before I fix up that little insurance matter. But I run the wrong way. I run up to the end of the road where the machine gun was. Well, you'd never believe it, but the jughead gunners had it off the tripod and were tappin' heads with it. Well, I ain't kiddin', we done a Virginia reel there for a while. Then the general comes wadin' up through the crowd to know where the hell the machine gun is. He sets it up himself. Sargint, I wish you could have seen the loop-the-loop that gunner turned and it wasn't no kraut that hit him neither. Well, the gun gets goin' an' that stops 'em from jumpin' over the hedge, an' we got to workin' on those that was already over."

"An' it wasn't long before their name was Excrement neither," added the gloomy man.

"Yeh, but the hell of it is," said Jake, "that they shot off all their machine gun amnition. They ain't got one cartridge left."

The Americans had beaten off the attack. Score one

for the ragged doughboys, hungry and cold. They had beaten off a savage attack of three times their number. Yet another one like it would finish them. Their rifle ammunition had not been depleted, but their machine gun ammunition was gone, they had sixty wounded in place of twenty-two, and thirty dead, among whom was the sergeant-major.

There were also eight men missing, men who had been sent out into the field as scouts. Why had they not given warning of the attack? Who could say? They were all dead now, all eight of them, and if one looked cautiously through the hedge he could count their bodies among the gray ones that dotted the field.

In the sunken cart path there was great activity. Men bound up each other's wounds, there was a continuous rasp of first aid packets being ripped open, others searched the belts of the fallen for ammunition, still others dragged their own dead to a place apart and threw the German bodies into the ditch. The more practical lined the hedge with their dead enemies, to keep out stray bullets. Out of this welter of activity appeared the general again.

"Come on, you," he said to Eadie and the other two, "I'm going to telephone some more. If the wire is out you'll have to go repair it."

He expressed no surprise that they were still alive, but stalked down the muddy road, past the four German prisoners, muttering something about "broad daylight," and "who the hell would have expected it?"

"Who was fool enough to take them four boche?" asked Jake.

"Some simple-minded guy," replied Eadie. "It's lucky they weren't near me. I had a pick and their heads look a hell of a lot like rocks." These four prisoners were guarded by a haggard bearded man who looked as if he

were trying to make up his mind to shoot them, but hadn't quite the courage.

The telephone worked. Five minutes for the connection and the general began to speak.

"Hello, I asked for Sheridan. Who's this? Oh. Good afternoon. Yes, sir." There was a long pause while the general listened and Eadie could see his jaw muscles tightening. The general suddenly hooked the receiving apparatus on the side of the instrument and, taking the box by the strap, he swung it once or twice and then by a mighty heave, hurled it out of sight over the hedge, the wire looping after it like the string of a falling kite. The general's face had become very old, the lines from nose to mouth looked as if they had been cut there with an ax. His cheeks had fallen in like the skin of a squeezed orange.

"There's an old army joke," said he to no one in particular, "about the first message that comes in after communication has been broken off for a long time. They always ask you, the men at the safe end of the wire, why you haven't rendered your ration return for the month of August ten years ago, or something similar. It's the ghastly truth. In the Boer war, where I was an observer, the first message by heliograph sent into Kimberley by the relieving troops was an idiotic complaint about a mistake in a horse's number. The return was four months old when the war broke out. And this ass has just told me that if I have no better sense than to give away my position to the enemy by a lot of indiscriminate firing, he washes his hands of me. Well, now, when I get out he goes to Blois. I'm here from G. H. Q. and I can have any man's head in the A. E. F. That isn't a threat, that's a promise. I was a plebe at West Point when he graduated, but he never did have any sense. He

couldn't pour water out of a boot with directions printed on the heel."

The general reeled a little bit and wiped the blood that trickled down from the stab wound in his arm. He looked at the three silent soldiers with a glassy eye. "I wonder how my machine gun in the road is," he muttered. Then summoning his breath, he put his hands to his mouth and shouted, "Connor!" In the pause that followed Eadie could hear men up the road talking and the click of shovel and pick where the men had gone back to digging the hole they had started before the attack.

"CONNOR!" Silence.

Adolph came slipping along through the mud and the general turned at the sound of his footsteps.

"What parade are you going to?" demanded the general after all had exclaimed, for Adolph's breast was now half covered with medals.

"Ma kitchenware," explained Adolph. "This gonna be a real Sattady night row. If I get killed, mebbe, the boche know it's killed a brave fellar what she don't see every day."

"Good idea," remarked the general. "Look out you don't get killed while there are any Yanks alive. If you do, your medals will never last for the boche. Now, then, how can I see how things are with my gun out there without getting killed?"

"First," said Adolph, "we go down to dat road an' holler like hell. If she's no answer——"

"No," interrupted the general, "she or he or they didn't answer. What then?"

"Give me your helmet," said Adolph, when they had come to the place where the cart path went into the main road. Before the other could protest he had snatched the gloomy man's helmet from his head, an easy thing

to do since the gloomy man wore the chin strap around the back of his skull.

"Hey!" cried the gloomy man, but Adolph had already crouched and spun the helmet out upon the main road.

"What's that for?" asked the general.

"We watch her two ten fifteen minutes, mebbe," said Adolph, "mebbe some more. If it don't move, it ain't shottin' no bullets, an' we can go out to see what dat mosheen gun do."

"But we can't sit here on the flat of our backs for fifteen minutes. The trouble with you French is that you don't understand a need for haste. Suppose another attack is pulled off while we're waiting? No, no. Let's do something quick."

"If you go out on de road," said Adolph, "somet'ing is liable to happen quick an' you'll stay right dere 'til Gabriel blow its ole horn."

"I've got a pair of field glasses, sir," offered Eadie, "and maybe if I can crawl just the littlest bit around the corner I might be able to see the gun and tell if there was any one behind the breastwork."

"Good idea," agreed the general, "only go ahead and do it quickly."

Eadie at once crept on hands and knees to the edge of the bank and then lay down and wriggled around, oblivious of the mud, until he could see along the road westward. The helmet lay a little way to his left, motionless in the center of the road. Lifting his head slightly, he could see the gunpit some twenty yards away. The gun itself stuck out, evidently on the alert for airplanes, since the muzzle pointed skyward. Eadie brought his glasses to bear and was distinctly shocked by the effect. The powerful lenses shot the gunpit right under Eadie's eyes; he could see the crumbling sod, the mud with which the

breastwork had been put together, and the packs that were its foundation. The gun indeed pointed skyward, but Eadie could see the front sight was on the side instead of the top of the barrel. A few inches of clip stuck out perpendicularly from the breach. Eadie wriggled a little further. Ah! There were five dead Germans in the mud of the road, lying curled up as though they slept, but the flat, punctured appearance of those men showed that they were dead. The sight of them was cheering. It showed that the gunpit had been rushed and that the rushers had been repulsed. If so the gunners must be all right, but lying low awaiting another attack. Maybe they could see something that Eadie couldn't. Again he looked at the gunpit. There was the mud, the hastily cut sod, a corner of a blanket, an empty clip. Eadie suddenly rose to his knees, regardless of consequences, but he could see hardly any better. Just a corner of the gunpit was in view and in this corner some soldier had cast his slicker. Eadie brought the glass to bear on the breastwork at that point, for the sleeve of the slicker was draped over it. From this sleeve drooped a wrist and hand, a purplish clay-colored hand, with blue nails. Eadie thereupon crawled back to the men in the cart path.

"Sir," reported Eadie, "the gun crew are all dead. I couldn't see into the pit, but I saw the gun off the tripod and a dead man's hand, and if there were any men in there alive they wouldn't leave a guy lying like that, however careless they might be of a gun barrel."

"I thought as much. What killed them, could you tell?"

"No, sir. The boche had rushed them and there were some stiffs in front of the gun. Grenades did it, probably."

"What will we do, Adolph?" asked the general.

"You want to do it quick or you want to do it slow?"

The general gritted his teeth once or twice, but did not say what was in his mind. Finally he spoke.

"You've been at this longer than I have, Adolph," said he. "Every war has its peculiar phases and I'm never the man to claim that I know everything. I'll ask for your advice and if I like it I'll follow it. Now then, what do you advise me to do?"

"Mebbe we wait for de arrerplane," suggested Adolph. "If dat not take too long time. De boche she'll send us one for to see what we do next. If she don' send, look out for anudder attack. If she send, look out for shells. We got two roads to cover, dis one an' de rudder one. How many men we got to cover dem two roads?"

There was a pattering sound on the main road, clicking and rattling as though ghostly horses trotted there.

"No," said Adolph, after all had listened a few seconds, "we only got one road for a while. She firin' mosheen gun on de road. Like I tole you, watch out for arrerplanes."

"Come back," ordered the general. "I'll fix that."

Back in the center of his men, the general borrowed Eadie's whistle and blew it shrilly for attention.

"Keep up your courage, men," said he, "you've done well. They won't bother us any more after that repulse. In case an airplane appears I want every one to take his rifle and get ready to fire it. But don't fire until I give the signal. When I blow the whistle, fire a volley. If I think we can get in a second one, I'll blow again. We may not bring him down, but we'll drive him away. That's all. Remember, don't fire until I give the signal."

The general turned to Eadie and remarked in a low voice, "We're putting on a fight here that backs some of the old Indian skirmishes off the map, and the hell of it is that we won't even get mentioned in the communiques for it."

"Come, Adolph, let's go up and arrange some kind of service of security for the upper end of this place. You men stay here."

"He don't know the half of it," remarked Jake when the general had gone. "I know what we're gonna get out of this fight. Six feet o' French real estate and a pat with a shovel. An' I give up a good job curryin' mules to be a liaison man."

"A guy never knows what a goddamn ijut he is till he goes to war," remarked the gloomy man. "I used to drive a milk route an' I was always crabbin' because I had to get up at three in the mornin'. But I got home at ten-thirty an' could sleep all the rest of the day if I wanted to. An' now I ain't shut my eyes for a week. Maybe more. It was such a long time ago I lost track."

"Now," said Eadie, fishing in the pockets of his muddy blouse, "we'll have a tailor-made cigarette. Gloomy Gus, you better hunt yourself another helmet. We aren't dead yet and we may live to see another pay day. I crave to. The eagle hasn't done his old bit for me for a long time and I'd like to spend a little money before I do my part to make Flanders fields fertile."

"There," remarked Jake, interrupting his task of pinning his tattered blouse together with safety pins from bandoliers, "that's just in line with my thought. This here army promised us food, lodging, an' medical attendance free. We ain't had neither for a week. I've a mind to write to the papers about it. The worst thing I've found about war is that there ain't no noon hour. They works double shift all night, too."

"I wonder if those jerry stiffs out in the field have got any chow on them," said Eadie. "They're in full pack. I think we could get out to them if we went at it carefully."

"We can look, anyway," agreed Jake. He and Eadie

reached up and took hold of some of the hedge roots and hoisted themselves up the bank, very, very carefully. The thought had just come to Eadie that it might be a foolhardy thing to leave the cover of the bank, when the hedge was suddenly beaten as by a gust of wind.

SWISH! Twigs and dead leaves flew. The two men at once let go their holds and fell to the bottom of the ditch, where Eadie scrambled hastily to his feet. He had heard beside him that sinister heavy thud that means a bullet has found a resting-place, and he knew that Jake was hit.

Jake still lay in the mud and in that second all the color had left his face, leaving it a dead white behind his red beard.

"Where'd it get yuh?" cried Eadie, lifting Jake's shoulders and sliding his own knee under them for support. The gloomy man looked on in open-mouthed horror. Jake grinned, a feeble grin that died away almost as soon as it began.

"They got me," said he, "can yuh tie that?"

Then, even while Eadie laid him down again and reached for his first aid packet, he was dead. The life had run out of him in those few seconds and Eadie had felt it going, had felt the shoulders against his knee turning from living flesh to lifeless clay.

"Where'd it get him?" husked the gloomy man.

"I don't know," said Eadie dully. "What difference does it make?"

He got to his feet and looked to see who had noticed the affair. No one. Stray bullets had been finding their way into that place for some time. A man would drop suddenly, shot through the head, or one would cry out, or yet another would hurl himself into the mud and lie kicking like a horse. The garrison had watched these casualties with horror and like passengers on a ship's

deck, who watch the waves, the longer they looked, the sicker it made them. Some of the non-commissioned officers, urged by Adolph, had then taken charge and after that, those men not on duty as watchers or engaged in digging shelters for the wounded, kept their eyes resolutely on the ground when a crash of equipment or a hoarse cry told them of another casualty.

Eadie went to the bush under which he had tucked his overcoat, and bringing it back, he spread it over Jake. His pistol, empty though it was, he belted on. Every one, he noticed, was doing something. The man who sits and waits for death to come and take him is the one who gets the horrors and runs shrieking from a shadow, so these men kept their minds from their situation by work. Some dug fox holes to lay the wounded in, but there were not enough picks and shovels to go around, so the others had to use their powers of invention. A few cleaned their rifles, inserting the ramrod from the muzzle so that they would not have to remove the bolt and so would always have the rifle ready in case of need. Others counted ammunition and wiped the moisture from cartridges in their belts. Some cleaned and inspected their gas masks. There were men there plastered from head to foot with that thick glue-like mud of the region, and sitting in more of it, who cleaned their shoes and puttees with their mess-kit knife for lack of another task. From time to time a man would be hit, or a lucky burst from a hostile machine gun would send the mud flying from the eastern wall. The general, a blanket about his shoulders, sat in the shelter of the opposite wall, where the bullets could not reach, and consulted with Adolph. Darkness was coming on and another attack was imminent. The lack of shell fire and of gas showed that the Germans had forces in the immediate neighborhood, who would likewise

suffer from the gas and among whom the shells might fall.

"They've got a machine gun going on us," said Eadie to the gloomy man, "and it's close at hand." The other made no reply, but drew his gas mask stupidly from the carrier and, turning it in his hands, replaced it again. "Do you know anything about machine guns?" demanded Eadie again.

"No," said the gloomy man, "I ain't much of a soldier. If you want to know anything about the milk business I could tell you. I use to be the smartest driver they had. It's funny the people that would put out their bottles dirty, though. Old man Thomas that owned the pulp mill and Doc Jupson, an'——"

"Steady!" said Eadie. "Sit down now and don't think about anything. Here, come down the road a ways. There now, sit down and clean your rifle. Suppose the general came along and wanted to inspect it?" Eadie left the gloomy man fumbling at the breach cover of his rifle and walked farther along the road. "Poor lad," he muttered, "he'll begin deliverin' milk to these doughboys in a few more minutes. Hey, there, Red Cross, you see that bareheaded bird down there taking off his breach cover? Keep your eye on him; I think he's started off his conk."

"That so?" said the medical corps man. "I'll just amble down there. What we need now to make this picnic a success is a couple of shell-shockers runnin' hermantile up and down this ditch."

"Have you seen any grenades around here by any chance?" asked Eadie.

"Sure," said the other, "that bird with the shirt full of bullets on has got some."

There was a man sitting under the bank who had on a species of jerkin, the front covered with pockets for

holding ammunition and the bottom divided into pockets for holding grenades. Eadie requested and received two grenades from this man. These he put into the pockets of his slicker and turning, walked down the path to the extreme southern end, past the prisoners there, and so to the main road. He listened here a few minutes, then as a loud clattering began, stopped, began again, and then was finally hushed, he nodded his head in satisfaction.

"I knew the damn thing was there," he muttered. He lay down and wriggled around the corner, as he had the other time, but the view had changed. There were no German dead now and the gun was gone from the pit. But what interested Eadie, sweeping the road and the high banks on both sides with his glasses, was that from the south ditch arose a little cloud of steam, and looking for the course of this steam, he could see a long black tube that ascended the bank and disappeared over the top. If the enemy was prowling about on the main road the general ought to be informed of it. Perhaps he had some way of watching the place where the road descended to the gulch where the enemy had first appeared. Well, that was none of Eadie's business, he had other things in mind. It was still too light for him to cross the road where he was, but if he got into the north ditch and went downhill on the east side, he could cross there and come up in the other ditch. It was worth a try.

"I'll probably get full of lead," he muttered, wriggling into the muddy ditch and crawling carefully downhill to the left, that is, toward the Meuse, "but it's better than staying in that hole waiting to be killed."

Halfway down the hill he paused and inch by inch raised his head for a look around. Nothing but the wild rolling country along the Meuse, distant woods, and the smoke of far-off shells. He rolled his helmet out into

the road. No action. He listened for the thudding of bullets. No sound. So, then, gathering his legs under him, he leaped across the road, grabbing up his helmet in one sweep. Still silence. He began to worm his way up the hill again, but before he reached the top a shell hooted down and tore itself apart very close to the place where he had crossed the road. The place was under observation then. Eadie cursed. If they started chasing him with shells, probably from a battery on the east bank of the Meuse, they might very well spoil his plans. The second shell, however, burst in the field toward the American lines and after it came quite a lively bombardment. Whoever had seen Eadie had thought it was the Americans trying to escape to their own lines, and so the German artillery began to pound the field south of the road. Eadie continued his progress, but slower and slower, more and more carefully. He breathed only at long intervals. There were things in that ditch that he had to crawl over, shutting his eyes when he did so. There were pools through which he went, wetting himself to the bone in their icy waters. He paused at last for a long time listening, but could tell nothing. The intermittent pounding was too loud and the sound rebounding from the slopes on both sides of the road made the location of its origin impossible. However, he took one of the grenades from his pocket and continued the journey. He made about the same speed as would a snail, even less. He had his life in his two hands and if he made a noise he would lose it swiftly and unpleasantly.

A faint hissing tightened Eadie's muscles and brought him to a breathless halt. The hissing gradually died, but not before Eadie had discovered where it came from. It was the steam coming from the tube that he had seen with his field glasses. The tube lay in the ditch, its open end still breathing faint vapors, and the other end go-

ing out of sight over the high bank. Under cover of his slicker and blouse Eadie cautiously pulled the ring from the grenade. Then, oh, so carefully he seemed to flow along the bottom of the ditch till he came to the tube. It went up like a black vine and at the top of it was what Eadie sought. He stood up.

"Jake," he breathed, "if you can see me now, watch this." Then he threw the grenade.

Up into the air it went, over the bank, and disappeared. Immediately that hellish pounding began again, a buzzing as though the grenade had been a stone that disturbed a thousand rattlesnakes. Eadie shivered. He did not know much about grenades—he should have counted before he threw it—suppose it was defective—suppose they found it and dropped it back—CRACK! An explosion audible even above the pounding. The pounding stopped, whimpering cries, a rumor of running feet, silence.

"Now, then," thought Eadie, "I guess that pays for Jake." He turned around very, very carefully to go back, but instead he paused and his heart began to beat rapidly. Why go back? Why not go up and see what was at the other end of the bean stalk? He had another grenade and might as well use it here as anywhere else. There are times, after all, in battle, when a man's heart begins to sing, for he knows that the thing he is about to do is likely to cost him his life, but he is going to do it just the same and he feels justly proud of himself that he has the courage. Eadie turned, then, once more toward the bank. He tugged out the ring of the second grenade and looked up. The bank was too steep to climb there, but a few yards down the road the rain had washed out a gully. To this place Eadie crawled. Then, standing up, he took a short start and ran up the gully at full speed, came out in the field and flung himself down. He stayed there five minutes before he dared raise his head.

No one had fired at him, there was no shout, no grenade banging, so he judged it safe to look around. The first look satisfied him.

Not far down the field was a dead German and near him the waist of another. There was a hole there, evidently, and the legs of the second German were in this hole. Eadie went there. The hole was occupied by two more Germans, one still alive, and by a thing that looked like a stovepipe on a sled. This was a heavy type machine gun, its support in the prone position. The tube from its cooler went over the edge of the bank into the road and it was the steam from this tube that Eadie had seen. The German machine gun, the Maxim model 1907, has its barrel water-cooled, and, the water boiling after about five hundred shots, steam is ejected, so that the location of the gun would be readily detected, were it not for the tube that is attached to the cooling reservoir, and which conducts the steam to a distance or to some place where it cannot be visible to the enemy.

"Now how the hell am I going to get this thing back?" muttered Eadie. He had expected to find a gun there and its crew would be doubtless dispersed by the grenade, but the danger lay in the fact that there might be a supporting gun. He saw no signs of one. The hole in which the gun lay was protected from fire from the American lines in rear by curves in the ground between, and this same background prevented the men in the cart path from seeing it. The gunners had undoubtedly come up and established their gun while their friends made a diversion in front of the American gun on the road. The gun once in position, the American gun had been destroyed and sniping and harassing had been started on the Americans in the sunken cart path. Eadie had a fine view of the American position, a long curving line of hedge, but in the gathering dusk there was no sign

of life behind it. If he could only signal now for a little help—the thing was too heavy to take back alone.

"By God!" cried Eadie. "Why take it back?" If the Germans rushed the hedge again he could take them in flank. If they came along the road, they were his meat. The grenade that he still held in his hand he hurled in the general direction of the German lines in case any one there was coming to see what had happened to the gun, and then he proceeded to clean out the hole.

The two Germans he shoved over the bank. One of them was alive, but Eadie had other things to do than to take care of wounded Germans. It was getting dark rapidly and the main thing was to inspect the gun while he still had light. A hasty glance showed him eight or ten boxes of ammunition, a half dozen stick grenades, and an overcoat in the hole. Then he turned to the gun.

Eadie had fired one of these one day with Ham and the machine gunners. All he had to do was to take hold of the handles, push off the safety catch, and push on the corrugated thumb piece. A glance showed him that there was half a belt of ammunition still left. When that was gone, he would see about reloading.

Suddenly, with a long hiss, a flare went up from the gulch and burst almost over Eadie's head, burning with a ghastly green light. He was still wondering what it meant, when, with the roar and crash of a heavy surf on rocks, a box barrage was laid down just behind Eadie, on the eastern side of the hill, and on the line of hedge that marked the cart path. The bursts were not near Eadie, but hunks of steel began to buzz and sing, and so he kept low in the hole. Lying full length behind the gun, he could just see over the rear sight into the field across the road where his comrades were. That barrage meant an attack and Eadie meant to be ready for

it. He put his elbows on the pads of the support as Ham had showed him, gripped the handles and waited.

The enemy came suddenly out of the gulch, in two columns, tearing across the field. The hedge crackled with rifle fire, even as the barrage swung out into the eastern side of the hill. The gun leaped under Eadie's hands as he pressed the thumb piece. Ah, what a glorious sound it made! What was that? Some one had cried out. Again that cry, audible even above the clacking of the gun and the rumble of the barrage.

"By God, the wounded jerry! They're comin' up the road!"

He leaped to his feet and looked over the bank. A dark river of men was rustling along there and the wounded German that Eadie had rolled out of the hole was calling to his comrades for help. From the far end of the cut, where the cart path turned off the main road, four or five rifles flashed bravely. There was a guard there after all. They must have come down right after Eadie had gone out. Well, no time for that.

The German machine gun could not be trained into the road, Eadie's first frantic effort showed him that. What then? Prop up the rear end? No. Get it out of the hole and onto the slope? Good. Eadie seized the front end of the support, swung it out of the hole, grabbed the back end and swung that, then cleared the ammunition belt. He worked fast, for seconds counted. A quick glance showed him that he could now fire into the far end of the road, but that if the Germans fell back and attacked him from directly below he was lost. He flung himself down, placed his elbows, seized the handle and opened fire. It was hard work, for the gun leaped and wriggled, and being poorly placed, it was doubly hard to control. He kept shoving up on the breach to keep

his fire low, and had the satisfaction of seeing the dark mass below him buckle, bend, thin out, and finally disappear, leaving only the scattered wreckage of its dead behind. There was a thin cheer from the far end of the road.

"Ah, boy," remarked Eadie to himself. "What it takes to be a machine gunner I got in clusters!" He decided that just to the left of the old position of the machine gun there was a place where he could not only cover the field across the road, but also the slope where the road dropped into the gulch. Any more attacks that came up the road from the gulch could then be broken up before the enemy got up the hill. In the remaining light he could see men crawling in the opposite field, the steady flash of rifle fire from behind the hedge, and the great black shape of an airplane that ducked and swooped and circled over the line of the hedge. The barrage had stopped, except the shells that were bursting between the road and the American lines to the south.

Again Eadie seized the handles of the support and, dragging the gun behind him—the sled-like support was probably fashioned with just that end in view—he got it to the new position and swung it again toward the enemy. A new attack had just swept out of the gulch and the airplane, to aid it, was flying low and raining down bullets upon the Americans, the tracers glinting like sparks from a Roman candle. Eadie could hear voices calling, the American fire seemed to lessen, there was a thin piping, and the ragged crash of a volley. The airplane jumped as does a wild fowl that receives a charge of shot, then climbing, turned suddenly sideways and fell swiftly to earth. Crash! The gulp and roar of an explosion, and the wreckage was in flames.

"Let's go!" cried Eadie. Beyond the flames of the burning plane he could see a wave of men coming up

the east face of the hill and on that wave he swung his gun. It rattled for several seconds. Silence. Eadie pounded the breech to free the jam, and pressed harder upon the thumb piece. Then he looked closely at the breech. The ammunition belt had run through. "That's simple," he muttered. He crawled over to the hole, gathered up three boxes of ammunition, and then returned. The plane blazed now, a pillar of fire from wings to upended tail and by its light Eadie could see that there was still another belt in the box by the gun. He seized the end of this and inserted it in the breech. The tongue went through easily and the first bullet clicked into the chamber. Eadie then trained the gun on the enemy and pushed the thumb piece. The gun remained quiet.

"Ah, there's a damned lever you have to pull!" he cried. The light from the plane had rapidly died out and it seemed to Eadie that it was much darker than before. He felt both sides of the breech, he got up from the ground and inspected carefully with his eyes, but no lever could he see. There were chains and little buttons and a handle that he discovered locked the traversing gear. Across the road the fight raged and men shouted in English to "Hold 'em!" or "Look out for your end!" There was also considerable yelling in German, probably the officers urging on their men. Eadie in the darkness fumbled with the gun, cursed, raved, pulled out the belt and inserted it again, pressed the thumb piece until his arms ached and was about to abandon the gun when he discovered a knob on the right side that moved. He shoved it down all the way and allowed it to come back. The machinery clicked.

"That's it!" cried Eadie, but the gun remained silent. Eadie rested his head on his hands and tried to think calmly. He was like a man who struggles with the silent motor of an automobile at night and far from home or

aid. What else could he do? The thing would not work. He was tempted to hurl it all over the bank and into the road. Yet his comrades in that ditch had need of him, the gun must be loaded some way, and if he tried again, slowly, he *must* discover the method.

"Now suppose I pull the belt and shove that lever at the same time?" He tried to do this, but the knob of the lever slipped from his hand and snapped violently back as he pulled on the belt. The mechanism chuckled sarcastically, *but the belt jumped forward.* "By God!" cried the sergeant. This time when he pulled the belt he deliberately let go the lever. Again the gun clicked and the belt jumped. Without daring to hope, Eadie tried pressing the thumb piece. The gun barked joyously.

"Letter go!" shrieked Eadie. He settled his elbows and swung the gun into a dark mass in the opposite field, that melted away before the blast. He threw a half dozen bursts into the eastern field by the wreckage of the plane and then, pulling down on the handles, tried a little indirect fire on the gulch. He began to have trouble with his eyes, specks danced before them, and at one second he thought he saw counter attacks emerging from the gulch; at the next he could see nothing but the empty field, dotted with dead. He kept the gun going, pausing now and then to rest his thumbs. He understood loading now and the second belt he inserted with ease. The enemy he expected every minute would pay him a call, but he was unmolested. Perhaps the men he had heard running off after he had fired the grenade had not reported the loss of the gun, or there might have only been four men with the gun after all, and the two bodies in the field were those who had run. If that was the case the Germans would think it was their own gun, firing on the Americans, and if they felt the effects of it in their

ranks, they would attribute it to the rifle fire from the hedge.

The Germans changed their tactics. They retired to the gulch and shelled both hedge and main road for an hour or two. They drenched the place with gas, they watered it with machine gun fire. They wanted badly to drive a living wedge down the gulch and separate the two divisions whose flanks touched there, but this force of Americans prevented it. The enemy did not know that there were only about a hundred starving men holding them up. And then, the Germans at that time did not have the determination and eagerness in attack that they displayed earlier in the war. Nevertheless, after the bombardment they launched three simultaneous attacks. Eadie broke up the one that came up the main road from the gulch almost before it started. Then he turned the gun across the road. It seemed the enemy would never stop pouring out of the gulch. His head reeled, he shouted and howled. The gun grew hot and a frightful smell of burning oil and red hot metal arose. Eadie shoved in a new belt and turned loose on some men trying to bring a gun up the opposite bank. Their gun went clattering down into the ditch, but the men stayed where they were. Eadie's gun suddenly clucked like a hen and lapsed into silence.

"God damn it!" yelled Eadie and added his opinion of the gun and the man that invented it. There was still half a belt, it must be a jam. Eadie pounded the breech, pulled the belt, snapped the lever, did everything he could think of. Then he noticed that the bottom of the cylinder glowed a dull red. Ah! The water in the German gun is only sufficient to keep it cool for four belts. After that time the cylinder must be refilled. Eadie had never thought of that, but then, machine gunners are not made

in a day. The barrel had become hot, had buckled, and now the gun had fired its last shot.

Once more Eadie rested his head on his arms. Jake came and sat down beside him. Jake? Why, Jake was lying dead over there behind the hedge under Eadie's overcoat. Jake grinned, nevertheless, and extended his huge hand. Was it really Jake? Why, no. There was a girl there, dressed in black, with a white cap and apron. She held out a platter on which was a huge steak, garnished with butter.

"Oh, God!" shrieked Eadie, jumping to his feet, "don't start that again!" He staggered and fell across the breech of the gun. Three nights and two days without sleep, or rest, or food, and all the time under the strain of battle. Sergeant Eadie had collapsed.

Chapter VIII

BEHIND THE GUNS

EADIE opened his eyes with a start and was about to struggle, but the men that held him wore khaki uniforms, and their faces were sympathetic and kindly.

"Where yuh hit, buddy?" asked one.

It was day and rain fell heavily. The field that had been so lonely the night before was covered with Americans, walking steadily, their rifles over their shoulders, and their bayonets dripping rain. As far as the eye could see they marched along. Somewhere a barrage growled.

"Where yuh hit?" asked the man again. Eadie tried to speak, but no words came. Practiced hands turned him over and explored under his blouse. "He's all right," said some one. "There's no blood an' I don't feel a thing."

"Yes," said a third voice, "shock and gas, write it down. What's the name on that dog tag?"

"Here!" cried Eadie, "I'm all right, I just fell asleep a minute or two." His mind began to clear a little and he could see that there was an unfolded stretcher on the ground, that one of the men who had supported him was evidently a bearer, and that the other man was a doctor, for his collar bore the insignia of an officer of the medical corps.

"Sure," said the doctor, "we know. We're just going to fix it so you can have a little more sleep. You've got a little whiff of gas, I know the signs."

"No, no!" shouted Eadie, so that even the marching men turned to look at him. "I tell you I'm all right. Let me alone! I was evacuated for gas once before and I've had enough razzberries handed me ever since to keep the A. E. F. in jam a hundred years. Nix on that stuff. I'd spit my lungs right out on the ground and kick 'em over the bank before I'd go out for gas. No, sir! No more jawbone wound stripe for mine. One is enough."

While Eadie was speaking the doctor had turned his back and seemed to be looking at the scenery. He now turned with a bland smile and began edging toward Eadie. The stretcher bearer began to close in on the other side. The doctor kept one hand behind him.

"Yes, yes," he said soothingly, "that's right. It's a dirty trick, that. Sure. Don't you mind 'em, though!"

"Oh, man!" moaned Eadie helplessly, "now they're going to give me a shot that would put a jack-mule away." He took a step backward instinctively, then his hand flew to his holster and the gun seemed to leap out to meet it. Eadie swung the muzzle at the doctor and the stretcher bearers. It was lucky that it was empty, for his hand gripped trigger and butt-safe in a drowning man's clutch.

"Get the hell away from me!" growled the sergeant. The doctor and his assistants complied immediately, with more haste than dignity. A crazy man and a .45 are as dangerous a combination as gasoline and a match. Eadie watched them go grimly, then holstered his pistol and walked aimlessly up the hill a little way. "That's the way to handle the medical corps!" he muttered.

On the hilltop he paused. There was a wall of smoke far to the north that marked a barrage and tall black plumes in the distant fields showed where enemy shells were falling among the advancing troops. An ambulance rumbled up the hill from the gulch whence the German

attacks had come the night before. Along the hedge that marked the sunken cart path was a long line of recumbent figures, to which additions were constantly being made. These must be the dead. Of the bitter conflict of the night before there was no sign except the German dead lying thickly and the blackened pile of junk that had been an enemy airplane. Jake was over there, and Lieutenant Connor, who, if he did not know much about being an officer, at least knew how to die like one. Perhaps the gloomy milkman was there, too, and Adolph. But the rest of them? Eadie guessed that the Americans had made a general advance at daybreak. His watch now told him it was eight o'clock. The survivors of the garrison of the sunken road had probably gone on with the advance, or else had been relieved and sent to the rear.

"I'm going to be relieved, too," decided Eadie. "This isn't my division, anyway."

If the ambulances could come up that road from the gulch then he could get out that way, decided the sergeant. He went down into the gulch, not looking at the dead Germans there, and so up the opposite slope. It was clear, now, why the Germans had not made a more determined attack by way of the main road. It was because they had been under observation from the southern end of the gulch and the attacks that did come through that way must have suffered heavily from American fire from the south. The road itself was deserted. There were a few bodies, American and German, a great many German signs, a long line of empty dugouts, a dead horse or two, and the usual flotsam of overcoats, blankets, gray and brown, packs, rifles, and empty machine gun clips. There were no men. Eadie got a glimpse of a long wriggling black line crossing a distant field and going south. These were prisoners, but they were the only living things he saw for more than a mile. Here the road joined an-

other and Eadie took the south fork. Immediately he met infantry marching in column, a whole brigade, he thought, until he noticed the fresh uniforms, the shaven faces, and the brand new equipment. Replacements, these men were, going up to fill up the depleted ranks of some division. No, that wasn't it, because replacements wouldn't be marching in column so near the front. This must be a fresh, untried division, going in to see what it could do.

"Where yuh goin'?" called Eadie.

"To Berlin!" the men answered him with a cheer.

Eadie was moved to laugh hoarsely. "There's bad boys up there in the woods that'll splash your new clothes all over mud," he called. "That Berlin road is kinda rocky."

A column of artillery, some Three Hundred and Something regiment that Eadie had never heard of followed the infantry, and after that, suddenly, he found himself in crowded country.

The first sign was a rolling kitchen in the ditch. This was some kind of a new fangled apparatus that burned kerosene instead of wood, judging from the stop cocks along the bottom The reason for its being in the ditch was not hard to find. The cook had run out of kerosene and there being no more to be had, the kitchen had been abandoned. Behind the kitchen was a mule and behind the mule a limousine, its radiator shattered. A shell had done that, or a collision in the dark. More dead animals, a stalled tank, a German limber, an ambulance with the roof gone, rifles, cans of hash or bully beef, crescent shaped sacks in which sho-sho ammunition is carried, more mules, an overturned truck. All, all spattered with mud from the traffic that passed and repassed on the road.

From time to time the road went over a low rise, and from here, if there were no woods, Eadie would have a

view of the fields where thin lines of men flowed steadily toward the front, or batteries of artillery, in the open and with no attempt at camouflage spat flame and shells at the enemy. From time to time tanks waddled across, looking like a flock of ducks in search of a pond.

Again he came to a break in the road where engineers labored, some to fill in the great ruts with stones, others to pry out a battery of howitzers that was mired to the hubs. Always the same panorama, distant woods, rolling fields, rain, engineers, infantry, and everywhere mud and waste and wreckage.

At a crossroads Eadie sat down upon a block of stone and considered. He had not the slightest idea of where he was, there was no M. P. there, nor any signboard that would indicate where the roads went. He not only had no idea of his own location, but he had no idea of the battery's either. The relief was going to tell him where the battery was, but he had seen no relief. At that moment a two-wheeled cart appeared around a turn and came bobbing toward Eadie. This cart had a tank on it and was used for carrying drinking water. It was drawn by a horse in the shafts and another, hitched alongside, was supposed to lend his assistance. The cart bore a pump and a suction hose and bobbed up and down with the action of its sloshing contents. The interesting thing about this particular cart was that it had upon its side the words, "Battery A," and the man that drove it was one Cracker Coombs, a man well known to Eadie.

"Hey!" called the sergeant, standing up.

"Hiyuh, sahgunt," replied Cracker, reining up his steeds. "Wanta ride? Climb on."

Eadie complied gladly enough. "Where's the battery?" he asked, as Cracker clubbed his horses forward once more.

"Down the road a piece," replied the driver. "It's a

hell of a long ways to come fo' wattuh three an' fo' times a day. Git on thar, you no account son of a bitch!" Thus he addressed the off horse, who had been walking with loose traces, while the one between the shafts tugged and grunted.

"What good's that horse hitched on like that?" asked Eadie. "I never saw one of 'em doing any pulling."

"Oh, he's kinda company fo' the othuh one," replied the driver. "Where yuh been at, sahgunt, fightin'?"

"I'll say," agreed Eadie. "I've had enough of it for a while. The battery been doing anything?"

"Ain't fired nary a shot yet. We had two showdown inspections and a evenin' parade. It was a good one, too, only two o' them boche planes flew ovuh an' broke it up."

"That's a hell of a way to fight a war," remarked Eadie. "How come? Haven't they got any ammunition or what?"

"I ain't studyin' about that atall," said the driver, clubbing the off horse again. "I got to tote wattuh whether they fights or not. I heared we was to back up some rigimunt but they took foot in hand an' done gone an' no one knew whe'at to shoot. That's what the fust sahgunt was tellin'."

"Umm!" said Eadie, "well, maybe that's right. I was with an outfit and didn't hear an American shell for two or three days. How's the outfit feeding now?"

"Right slim!" said the driver.

In a few minutes the cart turned off the road and Eadie was home. From the seat of the cart he could see the battalion strung out along a field, the guns of the three batteries in position, behind them piles of shells, and the gunners sitting idly around in shell cases smoking. A long line of harnessed limbers hid themselves in the shadow of a row of trees. Men wandered aimlessly about, some shaved or cleaned the mud from their cloth-

ing, others dug themselves dugouts, some slept. Behind a clump of bushes was a pile of helmets, rifles, and miscellaneous equipment, with here and there a patch of white cloth. Signs such as these pointed to the presence of a dressing station in those bushes, and that pile of arms contained the equipments and weapons taken from the wounded.

"Here we are," cried Eadie, leaping down. The water cart always stops near the kitchen, thus bringing Eadie immediately to the place he sought.

"How's chances on chow?" cried the sergeant. The cook, who smoked with his back against the wheel, and the K. P. who scraped at the bottom of a pan with a stick of wood, regarded the sergeant with surprise.

"Ain't got much chow," said the cook dubiously. "Spud and the mess sergeant are off to see can they find a ration dump to steal a little for supper. We just got through with breakfast an' I put on everything I had."

"Damn and damn," cried Eadie. "I haven't set my teeth into food for three days!" The men were all looking sadly at each other when the first sergeant suddenly appeared.

"Ha! Sergeant Eadie!" he cried. "They had the rumor around the latrine this morning that you were dead. I knew it was a lie. I bet you found a steam-heated dugout I hear the boche have. The major wants to see you the minute you get back."

"What for?" demanded Eadie.

"I bet he wants to know where the steam-heated dugout is," said the K. P.

"I think he's got a new job for you," said the first sergeant, glaring at the K. P. "Maybe he's going to send you to officers' training camp. There's a detail goin'. Go see him. You better shave first, though, and clean yourself up a little."

"That's right," said the cook. "You go shave an' see the major an' when you come back I'll have somethin' for you to scoff. I got a little karo an' some hardtack an' a bit o' flour an' bacon grease, an' maybe I can bum some coffee off B battery. Maybe Spud an' the mess sergeant'll be back by then, too."

"Where's the liaison detail hang out?" asked Eadie.

"Soft," replied the first sergeant. "They got an old jerry dugout up on the hill there."

Eadie went in the indicated direction, after filling his canteen at the water cart. The dugout he found easily, for Baldy was in the doorway.

"Well, I'm damned!" exclaimed Baldy. "Yuh look like yuh been to war."

"Well, I haven't," said Eadie. "I've been snipe hunting. How's everything?"

"Ah, I knew it was you!" cried a voice, and Short Mack poked his child's face from the door. "I dreamed about money last night. Me and Baldy hollered 'Hey, goldbrick!' down every dugout between here and Sivry-la-Perche and when you didn't answer, we thought you were gone for good. What's the matter, did the M. P.'s chase you back?"

"I'm going to shave," said Eadie, hitching forward his musette. "That's something Short Mack can't do."

The sergeant removed slicker, belt, and blouse. His gas mask he laid handily by and the major's field glasses beside it.

"Where'd you get *them?*" cried Short.

"A little bird flew down with 'em in his beak," answered Eadie, laying out his shaving tools.

"You're the cheapest illegitimate I know!" foamed Shorty. "If you had brains enough to be simple, I'd knock your nose off its trunnions! Gimme a look through 'em."

Short took the glasses and began to sweep the horizon with them, while Eadie lathered his face.

"Where's the red-headed guy?" asked Baldy.

"He's dead." Eadie lathered in silence and then laid the brush gingerly on his gas mask. "Hold the mirror, will you?" he asked.

"What did it, shell or grenade?" asked Baldy, holding the steel mirror before Eadie's face.

Scrape, scrape, went the razor. Eadie pulled his nose out of the way, removed a budding mustache and shook the soap onto the ground.

"Bullet," said he. "They had a machine gun up and he stopped one. He died in a minute."

"Uh," grunted Baldy. He changed hands on the mirror and watched Short sweeping the horizon with the major's glasses. Eadie continued to shave. Jake's death had slight effect on these two, he thought, but then they had not known him very well. He, the sergeant, was not as affected as he might have been. He was surprised at this himself. But then how many men had he met, good lads all, in hospital in the States, in the casual company, on the transport, in rest and replacement camp, on trains, all up and down France, infantrymen, artillerymen, engineers, police, men of every branch of the service. Good lads they were, and he had talked and joked and drank with them a day or two, even a week, then they were gone and he never saw them again. He did not even know their names. Mike, Red, Hoop, Corporal, the Barber, N'Awlins, they were called. Where were they now? True, he might meet them again, but Jake he was sure he would never see. A slight chill went down his spine then. Who could tell what minute he or Short or Baldy might follow the same path that Jake had taken?

"That's a sorry shave you're givin' yourself," remarked Baldy.

"I know it," said Eadie, "but I'm in kind of a hurry. The major wants to see me."

"Uh," sneered Short, "we heard about that, too. There's rumor round you're off to officers' trainin' camp. Well, either they're damned hard up for officers or else it's the easiest way to get rid of you."

"You'll get all the more work to do when I'm gone," grinned Eadie, wiping his face and carefully putting away his tools in the musette again. "Now, then, Short, give us those glasses. You know I'm a bird that keeps everything valuable right on me. Also, when I'm gone, I want you to buscar around and get me a couple of blankets to sleep under."

"Who was your dog robber last year?" inquired Short.

"Go on, now, find me those blankets," said Eadie coaxingly, "and when I get my commission you can be a real dog robber."

"If they make you second lieutenant, I'm going to put in for Jack Pershing's job," called Short, as Eadie went down the hill.

The battalion P. C. he found easily enough. It was in another German dugout, evidently a large one. At the door he paused and made some attempt to brush off his clothes, but the task was hopeless. Anyway, it would be better to go in a battle-stained warrior. The effect would be more dramatic. Eadie knocked.

"Come in!"

The sergeant lifted aside the blanket that served as door and stepped in. A number of lanterns lighted the place, and Eadie could see a table, a telephone, maps, fungus-whitened beams, and the dim outlines of three officers. With difficulty, Eadie discovered the major, sitting at the table.

"Sir," said Eadie, saluting, "I was directed to report to the major. I'm Sergeant Eadie of A battery." He

squared his shoulders as he spoke, and felt a little sorry that the light was so poor and hence the officers could not see his wound stripe.

The major swung around in his chair and looked Eadie from top to toe.

"Sergeant Eadie, oh, yes," he said quietly. "You were detailed to go forward with the infantry September 26th, weren't you? Where have you been ever since?"

"Sir," began Eadie, "the division went to bits. The officer we were with was killed and the battalion commander after him. We stayed until night, all the officers we knew were killed, the men were retiring, and so we retired, too."

"Did you ask for any fire during the day?"

"Yes, sir," said Eadie, "we fired a rocket in the afternoon, but the barrage only lasted a few minutes."

"That's right," spoke up an officer from the shadows. "You remember, major, that the brigade called up and made us cease firing because the shells were bursting about two miles in rear of the line reported by the airplane?"

"Keep quiet," said the major. "I'm doing this. Now, then, sergeant, where did you go the next day? Why didn't you come back?"

"Well, sir, we were on the way back when we met Lieutenant Connor and he made us go along to help lay wire."

"Lieutenant Connor? He isn't with this regiment any more!"

"He had a Signal Corps detail from the Third Brigade, sir."

"Well, he might have that. He was transferred to another regiment of the brigade. The brigade was split up at the opening of the attack and he might have had

a detail from the Third Brigade, but that doesn't allow you to go with him."

"He ordered me to go with him, sir, and I thought he was still with the regiment. I hadn't seen him around the battery since Saint Mihiel, but he had good reasons for staying out of sight." Snickering from the shadows showed that the other officers agreed with Eadie.

"Well, we aren't getting anywhere," said the major coldly. "Any one can think up excuses, but facts are different things. Where's Lieutenant Connor now?"

"He's dead, sir."

"Well, where's the man that went with you?"

"He's dead, too."

"Oh, he is? Hmmm. Now, listen. We had a little affair with you on the Marne. You were sent out to find a bridge and if we'd waited for your report, we'd still be at Château Thierry. There was some kind of a rumor around that you were gassed. I think if a certain general order were extended to include gas cases there'd be a damned sight fewer evacuations for gas. Well, this time you do the same stunt. There's been too much of this going out on detail and turning up a week later, with some feeble alibi. I think I've got you. Anyway, you're under arrest while I investigate. Tell your B. C. and your first sergeant. You're not to leave your battery position under any circumstances. I hold them responsible. Call up A battery on the phone, Meadows, and confirm that. That's all."

The sergeant saluted and went out. He was tired, his legs ached, and his mind craved sleep. Between the Germans and his own officers, a man had a tough time in this war. On to the kitchen then. Eadie stopped on the way and asked the gas non-com for a new mask, pointing out that his, the can punctured as it was, was obviously useless.

"Yuh better go down an' see the doc," said the gas non-com, "if you been runnin' around with that mask long. There's been a lot of gas loose."

"Not on your life," answered the sergeant.

At the kitchen he filled his cup with coffee and the cook, wiping his hands on his apron, took off the stove a messkit full of some kind of gray matter.

"What's this?" demanded Eadie.

"It's good for yuh," replied the cook. "Eat it. It's bacon grease an' flour, with them pavin' stone biscuits stirred up in it."

"We got somethin' else for yuh," grinned the K. P., "fer sergeants only. Hardtack an' karo baked."

Eadie proceeded to eat. The stuff tasted good, especially since it was his first real meal in several days His head reeled a little bit from fatigue and his legs kept going to sleep. He sat on a ration box, his back to the warmth of the rolling kitchen, and ate. The K. P. chopped wood and the cook searched his teeth with a splinter. Eadie drank coffee and thought upon his lot. Jake had the luck after all. What was there in this war for a man? Work and fight and sleep in the mud and go without food, and be bedeviled by officers all the time. Three days of fighting and killing. Perhaps to-night he would have to go on the lines again. Winter was coming on and it was going to get colder every day. All honor to the French and British who had stood this misery for four years. As for his own particular troubles, they were annoying, but not serious. He could find some member of the wire-stringing detail, or even Lieutenant Harvey to testify for him. The general would say whether he had been a goldbrick or not. He had captured a machine gun single-handed, which was not a task performed by goldbricks. And that dumb doctor had wanted to send him out again for gas! He had fixed *him.*

By the way, the echelon must be found and Coke Mullins approached on the subject of pistol ammunition.

"How's it go?" asked the cook, taking out a knife and putting a fresh point on his splinter.

"Good," said Eadie. "I've eaten lots worse. I wish I had some soft bread to wipe out my messkit with." He got up and walked toward the water cart, intending to rinse out his cup.

WhooOOOOO! A sudden swelling roar, a roar like that of a lion a thousand times magnified. A shell! A near one! Eadie went for the ground but he felt iron going into him ere he started. The explosion he did not hear, but he saw a great sheet of flame open fan-like and shut out all the landscape.

When things cleared a little bit, Eadie found himself on the ground, lying on his side. He opened his eyes and then raising his head looked about him. The place was deserted. Far away some one called wildly, but there was no one in sight. Eadie looked the other way. A column of steam hid the place where the rolling kitchen had been, but Eadie could hear hissing and see a shattered blackened wheel, and the wreck of a marmite can lying on the ground. Beyond the marmite was the cook, one leg gone, and dead. The K. P. lay a little farther away, also dead, horribly so. Other than the hissing where coffee or grease dripped on the scattered coals of the rolling kitchen there was silence, save for the distant man that called despairingly.

Eadie lay down again quietly. He was hit and hit bad, he could tell by the way he felt. And he had been hit right beside the guns, in front of the entire battalion. A real hit. No more sound-off about jawbone wound stripes! No more wise cracks about going over the hill! The ground felt soft and comfortable. Right in back of

the guns! That shell had been a fast traveler. How many years ago had it been when he had told Ham that a shell could be heard five seconds before it burst? This latest arrival had but roared once and Eadie had felt its claw almost as soon as he heard the roar. There were feet pounding now, muttered comments, excited cries.

"Battery A's kitchen!"

"They're all dead! Jesus! Lookit the cook!"

"Get back, men, don't gang up around here! Get back! Another shell may land any minute! Where's the doctor?"

A dozen hands turned Eadie over and he could see a circle of white faces looking at him.

"Where'd it get yuh?" they cried.

"In the side," answered the sergeant. He was surprised to hear how natural his voice sounded. There were men there he knew, looking at him as though he were some strange and fearful object. There was Ham, open-mouthed, and some of Ham's gunners, a section chief, that Eadie knew, and several more. Off came his belt, his blouse was torn open, up with the shirt, and Eadie, raising on one elbow, saw IT. A great bunch like an inverted cup and in the center of this bunch a round jagged hole, with a tiny splash of blood on one side. He lay down again and gritted his teeth at the sting of the iodine.

"Got any more?" asked the first-aid man who was putting on the bandage. He was an old-timer, a man who had handed out pills to Eadie, and treated boils for him since the days of the recruit barracks at Ethan Allen. And now he was binding up his wounds!

"Yuh sure you ain't got no more nowheres?" insisted the first aid man. "Didn't feel but the one? Sure now?"

"No, that's the only one," said Eadie. "Did it go in?"

"Yup, it went in."

"I don't feel weak or anything, I don't want to get shoved out with a flesh wound."

"You earned your ticket to hospital all right," said the first aid man grimly. "Take him out to the road," he directed the stretcher bearers.

The two bearers grunted and lifted their burden. Then they began their bobbing progress across the field, down past some dugouts, and so out to the road. Eadie could see nothing but the gray sky, but he could hear men calling out, "Who is it? Who is it?" or "Whose kitchen was that we seen in the air?" Upon being informed that it was battery A's, those men who belonged to "A" cursed long and loud.

There was a row of men on stretchers beside the road, waiting for an ambulance. Eadie was laid down here, and a doctor appeared.

"Write out a tag now," said the doctor. "Wire it on him so it won't come off. That's a good dressing, we won't need to touch it. Gun-shot wound abdomen, put down. A. T. S. I think I'll give him a little morphine, too. Give him the injection, Clark."

Eadie turned his head at that and discovered a man holding a huge syringe of nickel. The man made the needle squirt tentatively. It was a huge syringe, so huge that the man held it in two hands.

"It's good for yuh," said the man, approaching Eadie. "It's so yuh won't get lockjaw."

"I think I prefer lockjaw," said Eadie, reaching back of him and taking a firm grip of the stretcher handles. Zip! It was done.

"That wasn't so bad," remarked the sergeant. "You've got a nice light touch. The looks of that thing are what give a guy the horrors."

"I get lots o' practice," said the man with the syringe.

"I do this about two hundred times a day. Give us your arm an' I'll give you somethin' will make you feel better."

Eadie closed his eyes after that and lost direct connection with events. Dimly he heard an argument between two of the attendants as to whose turn it was to go to dinner first, he remembered that the doctor asked him if he could drink a little hot chocolate, and he had a faint recollection of hearing familiar voices, Baldy's was one of them, saying in hushed whispers, "That's him there, the bareheaded one."

"By God," said some one, "I wouldn't have known him. He's about done for, my guess."

Eadie grinned without opening his eyes. He wanted to call to them, but somehow could not make the effort. A long time later he looked up suddenly. The place seemed changed, there were not so many stretchers there, and he had the sensation of having been asleep. Over him leaned a man. It was Short Mack, his child's blue eyes full of tears.

"You big bum!" said Short. "I thought you'd croaked."

"Fat chance," answered Eadie. "I'm going to spend the winter in bed. Think of me when you're sleeping in the mud with your feet in water up to the knees."

"Lookit now," said Short. "You'll be back to us by the time we go out to rest camp. You ain't got much of a wound after all. You're looking better already. The first time I came down here with Baldy and Ham we thought you were dead."

"What's on your mind?" demanded Eadie, for the other seemed to be at a loss for further words. Short blew his nose and blinked his blue eyes.

"Them glasses," he said. "Don't you think you better leave 'em with me?"

Eadie laughed and made his wound hurt.

"I meant to give 'em to you anyway," he said, "but I forgot." He lifted the strap from his neck and handed the glasses to Short. "You see where that leather is torn?" he asked. "When you get home you can tell your mother a bayonet did it. It was an American bayonet, but you needn't say that."

"I'll look after 'em," said Short. "I'll keep 'em in the fourgon an' you'll have 'em when we see you again."

"Bring out your wounded!" An ambulance rumbled in the road and the orderly thus announced its presence.

"So long, Short," said Eadie.

"S'long, see you in rest billets."

They took up the sergeant's stretcher then and carrying him down the slope, shoved him into the ambulance. Three more were loaded in, the back curtain was fastened down, and the ambulance took up its journey. The ambulance was cold. There was a blanket over Eadie, but none under him, and in the dressing of his wound his clothing had been considerably disarranged, so that the biting wind that came in through the burlap of the stretcher found his skin immediately. The blanket, possessed of that deviltry that inanimate objects often have, began to slide off. In trying to replace it the sergeant discovered that his feet and legs were like those of another man. He could see them, but he could not move them. They had plenty of sensation, however, which was that of intense, even Arctic, cold.

There was never a sound from the other men in the ambulance, never a word, nor a groan. Eadie could hear the muffled voices of the orderly and driver on the front seat, and the blast of a whistle from time to time, but that was all. He must have slept or fainted, for of a sudden the back curtain was raised, and the stretcher jerked out. The gray sky that Eadie remembered was replaced by one of blue, with airplanes humming in it.

He had a brief vision of a tent that seemed to be white, and then he was laid on the ground. Feet splashed by, and legs, but the bodies Eadie could not see without raising his head, an effort that had already become burdensome. Some one arranged his blanket, some one read his tag, and then a man appeared in a sheepskin coat.

"Want a little shot of dope?" asked the man.

"I'd prefer a little cognac," answered the sergeant. "I'm a bit chilled."

"Can't give it to you," said Sheepskin Coat. "Belly wounds can't drink."

"Ow!" cried Eadie, "you needn't pinch my leg! That leg's got plenty of feeling in it, don't worry."

"Good," said the other. "Here, now, jump with this sergeant. In with him! Put him in that ambulance right there!"

Again the stretcher was seized and again a bobbing journey began, ending with the squeal of the sliding hooks and the thump of the stretcher handles against the front of the ambulance. Eadie was thankful that he was going so soon. The few men that he had just seen were all wearing masks in the alert position, there were a lot of planes in the sky, and things were generally too suggestive of the front. Eadie wanted to get away from it, to get somewhere where he could go to sleep and be sure to wake up alive, a place where he could close his eyes and sleep around the clock without having some one tugging at his heels with a curt request to snap out of it and go along with Lieutenant Whosis to find the infantry. He wanted distance between him and the German army. He wanted no more people coming for him with a bayonet, nor did he ever want to hear a machine gun again. The sound of that last shell he could still hear. Whoooooo! Then the flame! The thought of it was like a blow. That sheet of fire! When he closed his eyes it was there,

as clearly as he had seen it on the field. The other men in the ambulance made no sound.

It was dark. There was no rattling of hooks, no rumbling of wheels, no creaking of the ambulance body. Eadie, instantly awake, realized that the ambulance had stopped, but where? Had it been abandoned?

The passengers were silent. Eadie pounded on the little door beside his head. No action. Again he pounded. There was muttering outside and the door was jerked open. Darkness of late twilight, streaming rain, and the dim figure of a man.

"Look out!" choked Eadie. The other man leaped aside.

"Is that blood?" gasped the other man after a while. "Jesus!"

"It tastes like it," said Eadie, wiping his mouth on his sleeve. "Why the delay?"

"They're shellin' the road up ahead," said the other man. "If they keep it up very long we'll turn an' go round by the other road." He shut the door.

Shelling the road! Nightfall and still in range! Where had he been at dawn? On the lines by his machine gun? They had wanted to send him out then for gas. Wasn't it lucky he had waited! Now he was going out with a real wound. Somewhere nearby a man was getting in his winter's coal. Blong! A shovelful would land in the chute and go rattling down. Blong! Another one. It wasn't coal, it was shells landing. Eadie was glad the curtain was down in back so that he could not see the flash of them. If he ever saw a shell explode again the shock would kill him.

There was a light in the ambulance now, a lone bulb that hung from the ceiling. A second look around showed the sergeant that his journey was over. He was not in the ambulance, but in a room or a barrack, or a shed.

Anyway, something with a roof on it. The electric light swam in a kind of haze, and showed how dark the place was. Men moved about, their shirt sleeves rolled to the elbow, appearing and disappearing out of the darkness like phantoms. There was a nurse there in a blue uniform, who walked up and down. She spoke to the men from time to time, but Eadie could not hear what she said. She seemed to be very tired. On Eadie's right hand was a silent, blanket-clad form, and on his left another. Raising his head, he could see a row of stretchers disappearing in the darkness. There was a ringing in his ears now and he could not hear very well, but he was certain that the men on the stretchers made no movement, nor uttered any word. They might be dead. Probably many of them were.

"Yuh want these?" A man stood by Eadie, holding in his hand a little white bag and in the other Eadie's whistle and collar ornaments.

"Sure," said Eadie, "save 'em. I'll need 'em some day."

"What else yuh got?"

"Razor and stuff in that musette. Dump 'em all in; musette and all."

"Right. Can yuh raise up a little bit? I'll button that shirt in back for yuh if yuh do."

The sergeant raised himself on his elbows. He was astounded to see that he was undressed and that a pajama shirt had been put on him, backside front for ease in donning and removing. The man, an orderly, deftly buttoned it in back and Eadie lay down again. Two blankets they put over him and left him. The blankets scratched, but they were warm and Eadie felt more comfortable than he had for a long time. He slept and only awakened once, when the nurse in blue, evidently a fresh young thing, pinched his leg and awakened him. He requested her profanely to leave his leg alone.

Daylight. An orderly, smoking a cigarette, was sweeping the floor and picking up blankets and folding them. Another nurse appeared, an elderly one, rubbing her hands with the cold.

"Good morning," she said to the orderly. "My, it's cold. How's business? My, my, I'll bet it's going to be a hard winter." She took a thermometer from her pocket and shook down the mercury. "Well, here's the first one," she remarked, sitting down beside Eadie's stretcher. She gave him the thermometer and began to take his pulse. He noticed, turning his head, that all his neighbors of the night before were gone. There were not more than three or four stretchers in the entire room.

"How do you feel, son?" asked the nurse. She was kindly-faced and gray-haired and her hand, for all it was cold as ice, felt very nice on the sergeant's wrist. She removed the thermometer and glanced at it.

"I feel fine," said Eadie. "When do they whittle on me?"

"Pretty quick," smiled the nurse.

"I wouldn't like to be forgotten," said Eadie, grinning. "I've been here since yesterday."

"I know it's hard to wait," said the nurse, "but we're doing the best we can. The doctors work two and three days without sleep and I know a lot of nurses that haven't had their clothes off since the drive started. You can't imagine the way the wounded pour in here. And it's getting worse every day." She got stiffly to her feet and went to the next man.

It was not very long after that before the stretcher was lifted again and they bore the sergeant into a black room. This he knew was the X-ray. He smelled ozone and he could hear the machine gumming softly. Hands felt his dressings, scissors snipped, more cold hands.

"Foreign body," said a mysterious voice and something about centimeters.

"Ow!" cried Eadie. "Let us know the next time you want to ram anything into me!"

"Steady, now," said the voice, "it won't hurt you if you don't tense your muscles that way."

"What's in there?" asked the sergeant.

"A little bit of shrapnel. You can hardly see it."

"I saw the hole it went in," remarked Eadie. "That's enough for me."

Once more Eadie felt the stretcher seized, a door banged, and he was in a sudden glare of light. White walls, a host of people in white clothing, and a cold table on which he was laid. The sergeant's heart beat very fast for a little while, for this was the cutting room. A man with spectacles looked at Eadie with great interest.

"I think you're a goldbrick," said the man with spectacles suddenly. "You don't look as if you were wounded the slightest bit."

"I am, though," grinned Eadie.

"So it appears," muttered the doctor, reading Eadie's card. "Jump over to Major Bevan and ask him if he won't come here a minute." An orderly left the table-side while the doctor put his cold rubber-gloved hands on Eadie's stomach. "How long since you were wounded?" he asked.

"Yesterday, some time. In the morning. It's on the card," replied Eadie.

"That's the time you were treated that's marked on the card. You might have been wounded last week. Well, it's long enough, anyway." The doctor wrinkled his brows and whistled softly. Another man, white aproned and rubber gloved, appeared.

"You want me?" he asked the other doctor.

"Yes, major. Here's a belly wound and from the X-ray I'd say he's got multiple perforations unless he's got a gut full of sawdust. It's twenty-four hours since he was wounded."

"What are you going to do?" asked the other.

"Well, I've already made up my mind, but I thought I'd like to hear your thought on it, too. What would you do?"

"Send him to the morgue and then start on the next one."

"Go ahead with that ether," said the first doctor gruffly. "Stick around, major, and learn a little something about surgery."

"Slow at first on that ether stuff," said Eadie. "I won't fight it if you go a little easy on it."

"Trust me," said the man at the head of the table. "Now. Take a whi of it. How's that?"

"By God, it smells good!" replied Eadie. It did, too. The first breath of it brought him a pleasant sensation of sleepiness and the second he drew in deeply as a man might a breeze from the ocean.

"Getting sleepy, Eadie?" asked the man at the ether, having read the patient's name on the card.

"Yup. Don't start to whittle before I get t'sleep, though!"

"No, we won't. You're going fine, Eadie. Let's hear you count."

There was a roaring in Eadie's ears now, a rushing of many waters. Count? Let them count themselves. A hand seized his arm. Eadie struggled up out of the waves of sleep as a man returns to the surface after a dive.

"Don't cut yet!" he cried. "I'm not asleep!" The roaring in his ears swelled louder.

Chapter IX

TREATMENT OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

EADIE began to awaken as a man does after a long night's sleep. His first thought was that it was all over, whatever iron he carried had been removed, and now there was nothing to be done but to get well. He opened his eyes. There was a nurse beside him, a young one, who looked at him seriously.

"Waked up?" she asked. "How do you feel?"

"Great," said Eadie weakly.

"What was the matter?" asked the nurse. "Appendicitis?"

"Appendicitis hell! I was shot through the belly!"

The slightest flicker of annoyance passed over the nurse's face. She stepped quickly to the foot of the bed and read the card there. When she came back her expression had changed completely.

"Don't talk any more!" said the nurse quickly. "Not a word. If you have any pain, put up your hand and I'll come right down to you. Don't groan. Don't drink any water." She put a basin on a chair where Eadie could reach it easily and went swishing away.

"Appendicitis!" thought Eadie. "Where did she get that?"

He became conscious of a great wide roll about his middle, a pile of bandages like a feather bed. Probably the nurse had seen this and leaped to the conclusion that Eadie had had his appendix removed. Probably they didn't see many belly wounds here. It was satisfy-

ing to have a real wound for once, a wound you could point to and say, "There it is!" or "If you don't believe it, read the card." And the whole outfit had seen him struck down! The major would be sore. Tough on the major. He would send pompously for Sergeant Eadie and would learn that Sergeant Eadie had been seriously wounded, and the same shell had killed two other men. He slept again, came back to consciousness and found a thermometer in his mouth, and slept once more.

It was broad daylight when Eadie opened his eyes again. His faculties were all working now; he could see, he could hear, he could smell. He was in a bare wooden structure, a portable house, one of those things that are put up by sections. It had a floor that boomed like a drum. Men in hobnails ran up and down this floor in a seeming endeavor to make all the noise possible. Doors banged incessantly. There was a steady flow of stretcher bearers past the foot of Eadie's bed. Clump, clump, clump.

"Where yuh want this guy?"

"Put him in this bed. Wait till I throw a sheet on it."

"Use a little speed, will yuh? He weighs a ton."

The place was thick with cigarette smoke, making the sergeant cough. His head began to spin with the noise. There were men in that ward that were silent and motionless, and there were others who sat up in bed smoking, shouting their experiences the length of the ward.

"I come round the corner and I seen 'em. I yells to the lootenant, s'I 'Here's the boche!' Then I got it through the arm. There was near a hundred of 'em behind some narrow gauge railroad tracks. We cleaned 'em all up. Me'n Jack there come out together."

"'S right. Didja see the airerplane we shot down? 'Volley fire,' yells the old man! Down she comes. Bing! Say, I hope I get sent to a base near Saint Nazaire. I

landed there. There's some mamselles I know in that town would knock your eye out!"

"Who the hell's got a butt? Yuh know where we're at? I don't. Verdun, maybe. Saint Mihiel. We was all day in a truck gettin' here."

Eadie's head swam. The noise was a real pain and the cigarette smoke burned like fire. A doctor and a nurse appeared and stopped at the next bed. They looked at the man there in silence and then the nurse did something with the sheet. Eadie turned for a better look. They had covered the other man's face.

"Now then," said the doctor, "this man."

The nurse turned back the blankets, pulled up Eadie's shirt and cut away the bandage. Eadie raised up and regarded himself. He had a long seam in his abdomen, neatly sewed in criss-cross stitches. It looked a lot like the lacing on a football and the resemblance was the more remarkable because a piece of rubber protruded from one end of the lacing. The doctor gave a tentative tug with a pair of tongs at this bit of rubber. Eadie exclaimed.

"It's just pulling on the skin," advised the nurse. "It won't hurt you."

"How do you know?" demanded Eadie. "I tell you I could feel that pulling on my toe nails. Hey!"

The doctor had tugged again and a lively stream of blood leaped out of the hole into which the rubber disappeared. The doctor thereupon desisted.

"When do you want him to go?" asked the nurse.

"Let's see. He came in yesterday noon. Let him stay a day or so. Chests and abdomens aren't supposed to be moved immediately."

"No, send me out," requested Eadie. "This place will kill me. Haven't you got a boiler factory somewhere where I can rest in peace?"

"Sorry we can't give you a private room and a special

nurse," snapped the doctor with unnecessary sarcasm. "We only handle about two thousand cases a day. Send him out if he wants to go." The doctor went on to the next case.

They carried away the man in the next bed who had died, the new occupant waiting on his stretcher on the floor while they changed the sheets. The banging doors and the clattering hobnails and the smoke and the shouting men continued, but late in the day stretcher bearers appeared and brought their weapon alongside Eadie's bed.

"By golly, this is quick work!" said Eadie. "This is the fastest I've moved since I was in the army!"

"Gotta have the bed," said the orderly shortly. "Lotta wounded men coming in now."

"Put your arms around my neck," said one of the bearers, "and then I'll raise up Tell me if it hurts you."

"No, I can do it all right," replied Eadie. "Where do we go from here?"

"Hospital train. Take you to the base."

The sergeant, then, hanging on the bearer's neck and moving his feet sideways, transferred himself from bed to stretcher, two blankets were put over him, and he was borne out of the noisy ward. A long swaying journey, marked with much grunting on the part of the bearers, and great clattering of board runways under foot, brought them to a dark shed. This must be the loading platform for the hospital trains, for Eadie could hear an engine panting somewhere and the clank and rattle of shifting cars. The stretcher was laid down on some wooden horses, the blankets rearranged, and the bearers left him. The shed was very cold and the stretcher became after a while extremely uncomfortable. Eadie slept a little, hoping to awaken and find himself on the train, but he was still in the same place when he opened his eyes. The

brace that held the stretcher open ground into his shoulders. He found that by pulling up his legs and crawling down a way, this pressure was relieved, but such a position cannot be maintained for any length of time by any one but a snake. If he shoved the other way his head hung down behind. He tried resting his head on a handle of the stretcher. This worked until he dropped into a doze and his head rolled off, nearly breaking his neck. A man went by and to him Eadie called.

"Hey, guy, how long have I got to wait here?"

"Couple of minutes, buddy," said the other over his shoulder, not even pausing to see who had called.

"Couple of minutes! I've been here a couple of hours already!"

"You're right, soldier," said a weak voice. "What the hell are we waiting for here? This is no way to treat a wounded guy! Yuh'd think we was on the town or somethin'."

Eadie turned his head. On the wooden horse beside him was another stretcher on which lay what looked like a snowman. The light in the shed was dim and it was some time before Eadie could make out that this snowman was a man whose head was one mass of bandages. There was a peephole behind which one might see a rolling eye and a kind of crack out of which came the man's voice.

"What hit you?" gasped the sergeant.

"Nothin' hit me; I hit a house. I was chauffin' for General Parks. I was runnin' with no lights and the road made a curve. There was a house on the other side of the curve."

"What did you do, go through the windshield?"

"Naw, I went through the roof o' the house. I been gettin' a raw deal everywhere cause I got hurt in an accident instead o' bein' wounded."

"I know," said Eadie with sympathy. The conversa-

tion ended there because it was tiring to both men to talk. An electric light was turned on.

"Hey!" cried Eadie, "these bastards aren't going to leave us here all night, are they?"

"You said it," husked the former chauffeur.

And so it was. The sergeant slept, awakened with the cold and a sensation of being broken in two, curled himself up in a ball and slept once more, awakened with pains in cramped legs and his wound burning as though afire. He had put in some terrible nights since he had been in France, but never a worse one than that. It was endless. The third time he awoke, a nurse stood beside him.

"Much pain?" she asked.

As a matter of fact Eadie felt quite comfortable that time, but he instantly decided he had been groaning in his sleep and that this nurse would undoubtedly give him a little jolt.

"Yes!" said Eadie.

The nurse thereupon gently lifted the blankets and slyly pinched his leg.

"Be yourself!" said the sergeant. "I'm badly wounded."

"I'm pinching you so that the needle won't hurt," explained the nurse. "If I didn't pinch you'd let out a shriek that would wake up the men in the morgue."

"Ah!" The sergeant saw the light now. Every time they pinched his leg he had been getting morphine. No wonder he had slept so much. "I hope I don't get the coke habit out of this," he muttered.

No more until daylight, when some one brought him a bowl of cocoa. It was hot and the sergeant drank it in sips, spilling a good deal down his neck.

"What's the idea in leaving us here?" demanded the sergeant.

"They brought you out for a train," said the man who had brought the cocoa, "and the train got full and there weren't any more. They expected one at two o'clock yesterday an' it didn't show up. Maybe it had a wreck, or maybe the crew got sick of it an' went over the hill. It'll come in any minute."

"Well, why the hell couldn't they take us back into a ward?" demanded Eadie. "Didn't any one have sense enough for that, or don't they give a damn?"

"Aw, it's too bad about you!" replied the orderly with asperity. "You got your junk out of you and all tucked up comfy with nice clean blankets an' still crabbin'! There was fifteen hundred stretcher cases just off the lines that had to stay out in the mud all last night because there wasn't room under a roof for 'em. Think it over!"

"Well, even so," muttered Eadie, "that don't make this barn any warmer nor this stretcher any softer."

The ex-chauffeur began to groan after a while, softly and regularly. Eadie felt like keeping him company, but remembered that the nurse had told him not to. It was, anyway, too great an effort. He could swear that the stretcher brace had worn a hole through the stretcher and his shoulder blades, too. The morning advanced and this time Eadie was unable to doze. He was wide awake, tortured by a thousand aches, and consumed by a burning rage. That his rage was impotent made it all the hotter. There was not even an orderly there to curse out.

Men went by carrying a stretcher. Eadie watched them idly until they had disappeared from his range of vision. Another stretcher went by.

"They're makin' a little more room in the wards," observed the ex-chauffeur huskily, turning his peephole toward Eadie.

"You don't think they've run a train in by any chance, do you?"

"I wouldn't put it past them," said the other.

The stretchers flowed faster and faster until a steady stream of them went by, the bearers treading on each other's heels.

"Hey!" cried Eadie. "How's chances on going out to that train?"

"Take yuh in a minute!" said the bearers.

"Whaddyuh say!" he called again ten minutes later, "take us out, will you?"

"Sure, next trip."

A nurse went swishing by up the aisle, and her Eadie seized in a drowning man's grip.

"Lookit, nurse," said the sergeant, "we've been here, this snowbird and I, since yesterday afternoon. Now they've run in a train and they're bringing the men out of the wards. We'll probably get left again."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the nurse. "I'll fix that. Here, er-you two, these men go out next. I'll sit right here by them to see that you don't forget." She sat down on the end of the wooden horse and sure enough, in a few minutes, back came four bearers, seized Eadie and the ex-chauffeur and started out with them.

"We're off," cried Eadie. "Well, chauffeur, I'll meet you in Paris."

They went out into the sunlight, down a long platform, and into the big brown car of the hospital train that was drawn up there. It had double doors in the side, like a freight car, for convenience in loading and unloading. Inside were iron bunks, running along both sides of the car, a double tier. They put Eadie in a lower in the corner, and the ex-chauffeur opposite him in the other lower. Evidently they had been given the last bunks, for seven or eight fully dressed, bareheaded, muddy men were thrust in and the double doors slammed shut. The dressed men all wore a huge white card hung to the buttons of their

overcoats. They looked about them sadly for a few minutes and then sat down upon the floor. Eadie looked at them for some time, grinning happily. These muddy men were gas cases and not entitled to a bed, but must sit on the floor of the car until the train reached its destination. Eadie wriggled a bit with satisfaction. *He* had a real wound.

In a very few minutes, so few that Eadie felt a chill as he thought of how close he had come to passing another night in the shed, there was a distant banging of doors, an officer ran down the platform making sure that everything was closed, there was a faint whistle, and an answering toot from the engine.

Crash! A chorus of groans from all. Clank! Slam! Another chorus of groans, and the gassed men cursing where they had been flung in a heap. The train took up its flat-wheeled journey.

"By God!" cried Eadie, "that bird must think he's running a freight! I never had a rougher start even on a 'forty hommes' train."

"They said we had an American crew on this train," said some one.

"Yuh might know!" answered a man from an upper bunk. "They pick out the engineers like they do the cooks. They line a bunch they've just caught an' a looey says, 'Count off! Number one is conductor, number two fireman, and number three engineer. The rest of yuh is shacks.' "

"What the hell is a shack?" asked some one.

"Brakeman."

"I bet he's right, too," muttered the ex-chauffeur. "But they oughtn't to put these here catch-as-catch-can engineers to runnin' hospital trains."

The train rattled away through the afternoon. There were windows in it, but the lower bunks were below the

sill and so Eadie could not look out. The gas cases talked and smoked among themselves, occasionally walking up and down the aisle to stretch their legs. At the head of Eadie's bunk was a white partition, and opposite it a kind of cubby hole, with a swinging oil lamp and a sink in it. In this cubby hole stood the orderly, a young man in O. D. shirt and an overseas cap. The orderly smoked many cigarettes and read from a French illustrated paper, the cover of which would be enough evidence in the United States to jail the editor for the rest of his life.

The train stopped on the average of three times an hour, coming to a grinding, smashing halt that slid every man against the head of his bunk. A long wait, several false starts, each one marked by a glorious crash as the engineers took up the slack and finally got away with a jerk that threatened to take out every drawbar by the roots. The wounded groaned and cursed and the train hastened on its way. Eadie judged that it made about fifteen miles an hour on the down grade.

The sergeant discovered after a while that by taking hold of the mesh spring of the upper bunk he could raise himself up and so lessen the pain of the stopping and starting of the train. When the train began to slow down, he would hook his fingers in the meshes and lift himself half out of the bunk. Here he would hang until the rattle and bang apprised him that the train had stopped. How thankful he was for that custom the French have of tooting the engine whistle before the train moves! When that whistle did its stuff, Eadie again seized the spring and pulled himself from his bunk, just in time to escape the slam that took up the slack, and the jerk that started the train out again.

It grew dark after a while and a dim electric light was turned on. When the train went at its full speed, this light was fairly bright, but when the train slackened there

was just enough light to show where the bulb was. The orderly came hustling through the car and issued each man a tin plate. Then he appeared with a wash boile in which he merrily rattled a gigantic spoon.

"Chow!" he cried, "come an' get it, who wants som chow?"

"What have you got?" asked Eadie.

"Canned willie an' spuds."

"Is that for us?" asked Eadie in surprise.

"Who the hell else?"

"That's no stuff for sick men."

"Lookit, guy, we ain't been to the garage for thre trips. Do yuh know that there's lots of American wounded bein' sent out in box-cars? You don't know how lucky you are to be on a real hospital train with nurses an' everything. How'd yuh like to be lyin' on the floor o' one o' them 'forty hommes,' lookin' through the cracks at the wheels goin' around? No chow in them cars, you bet. Whaddyuh want anyway? Chicken?"

"I could go a bit of soup."

"You could go a bit o' soup." The orderly snorted and mopped his brow with his shirtsleeve. "Well, there's a nigger in a white coat issues out the soup. When you see a nigger in a white coat come through, ask him for some soup. Maybe he'll bring yuh some champagne with it. Yeh," muttered the orderly, moving off, "when you see any niggers in white coats on this train, you just order up enough champagne to take a bath in." He went on down the car, rattling his spoon on the sides of the wash boiler.

The train jerked and banged its way through the night. Orderlies hurried through the car and the gas cases wandered up and down like lost children. It appeared that an icy draft blew along the floor of the car and no blankets had been provided for those that must sleep thereon.

Eadie slept in snatches, rudely awakened each time by the shock of the train stopping or starting, and the pain of his wound. Toward morning they made a long halt and throughout this Eadie slept heavily. He opened his eyes once, however, to find the car almost dark, a tangled heap by the doors where the gas cases slept like so many snakes all entwined with one another, and a whispering group about the opposite lower. In the morning he learned that the ex-chauffeur had died during the night. He was gone and another already had his bunk.

A second day was a replica of the first, but on the third the passengers began to inquire as to their destination and the probabilities of their arrival thereat.

"We been on this train three days!" declared some one, "an' that's long enough to go from New York to Texas. I bet we're goin' to the Mediterranean."

"We may have been on the train," observed one of the gas patients, who spent all his time looking out the windows, "but we ain't been goin' anywheres. We been standin' on sidings most of the time."

During the third day a nurse made her appearance. She was large and majestic of build and she walked as befitted her physique. This was the first time any one had seen her and her entrance into the car was the signal for a clamor.

"Hey, nurse, where we goin'?"

"Hey, nurse, how much longer we gotta stay on this damn train?"

"Whereat could a man get a few cigarettes?"

"Ain't they anything to eat here but canned bill?"

The nurse waved her hand wearily. "We're going to Nevers, or somewhere near there," she replied. "We'll be there pretty soon."

"Where the hell is Nevers?" muttered several.

As the nurse passed his bunk, Eadie reached out his hand and caught her skirt.

"Hey, nurse," he called, "I've got a belly wound and they told me in the hospital not to drink any water. Do you suppose I could now? I'm pretty thirsty."

"Certainly you can drink," she said. "Don't take too much, though, it might make you sick. Here, orderly, give that man a drink." This last she said over her shoulder. Strangely enough, the orderly did not seem to hear. The nurse had spoken almost into his ear, but he gave no sign. He leaned against the partition of the little cubby hole with closed eyes, swaying with the movement of the train. He might be asleep. The nurse had gone on, never pausing to see if her command had been obeyed.

Eadie waited a minute or two and then, reaching in back of his head, rapped on the partition.

"Watcha want?" asked the orderly, projecting his head from the cubby hole.

"How's chances on a drink?"

The orderly's eyes flickered. "I ain't got no cup right now," said he, "but a guy's gonna bring me some back in a minute."

Eadie lay down again. He had been thirsty for some time, not extremely so, but mildly uncomfortable. Now that he had been told that it would not hurt him to drink, he began to crave water. His mouth felt as though it were full of sand and a great weariness of mind and spirit began to steal over him, a sort of nagging unrest. Three days on this cursed train! Why, in three days he had gone from Le Corneau to Saint Dizier, diagonally from one corner of France to the other, and that in a freight train full of replacements and casuals, that stopped in every town while the train crew went up to the Café de la Gare and had a few drinks.

Eadie rapped again on the partition. "How about that drink?"

"Just a minute, ol'-timer, we'll have it."

The minute stretched into several minutes and the sergeant's patience became exhausted. He pounded on the partition but there was no response. A half hour later the orderly went down the car. When he returned Eadie seized his ankle. "For Christ's sake," he demanded, "are you or are you not going to give me a drink?"

The orderly squatted on his heels by Eadie's bunk. "Soldier," said he in an embarrassed manner, "I'd like to give yuh a drink. I would, I ain't kiddin' yuh, but to tell yuh the truth we ain't got no more water on the train."

"No more water!"

"No, we ain't got no more water. But we ought to be in in an hour or so an' they'll put yuh to bed an' you'll be all right. They'll put yuh to bed an' give yuh a shot o' coneyac an' soup an' you'll feel a lot better."

The afternoon darkened into night and the train still crept shudderingly on its way. The nurse was beset with inquiries every time she went through the car, but the wounded were beginning to lose interest. It was no longer a secret that there was no water to be had, and comment on this fact was bitter. These men were getting worse, they were drifting into the state where life or death mattered very little to them. In fact there was a slight preference for the latter. Some of the weaker ones died and were put off at way stations in the night, to be buried by details of Annamese labor troops.

Another long night of horror, of noise, and shock. Eadie was delirious at times from thirst and pain, at other times he lay and watched the weaving shadows on the roof of the car. So began the fourth day, but Eadie remembered little of it afterwards, save as a terrible

nightmare in which he seemed to be falling into unthinkable depths, with many stones that rattled and rattled.

Eadie suddenly realized that a wave of fresh cool air was blowing in his face. His mind cleared at once, as though he had just awakened from sleep. The train had stopped and the air in the car was cool and fresh, with a smell of grass and black rich earth in place of the foul reek of rotten blood and men long unwashed. They must have opened the big double doors in the center. Sure enough! The train had arrived at last, for the wounded were being carried out. Eadie could hear voices outside the car and some one asking some one else for a match. Presently it was his turn. Two big men in slickers put their stretcher beside the bunk.

"Now, then," said one, "where you hit?"

Eadie tried to tell them, but was startled to find that he had trouble in speaking. The stretcher men did not show any surprise; doubtless they were well enough acquainted with passengers on hospital trains. The two stretcher bearers bent over Eadie's tag and then prepared to lift him out of the bunk.

"Now, then," said the man at the head, "put your arms around my neck, old fellar, and just lie limp and we'll have you out in a jiffy."

"Take off his blankets first," said the other man.

"Naw, lift him blankets an' all; he'll be warmer that way. It won't be any harder. Look out, now. All set?"

"All set."

Tenderly they lifted Eadie, then swung him expertly onto the stretcher. The cool wind blew on his face as they bore him out. Shortly he was out in the open air with a light rain falling in his face and making him blink. He looked up into the hurrying clouds and thought how pleasant the falling mist was and the clean cold wind after the closeness of the hospital car. The stretcher tilted

downwards as the bearers went down the runway from the unloading platform and Eadie had a momentary glimpse of row upon row of low buildings, a wide expanse of barren muddy fields and a little red-roofed village just visible through the slanting rain. Then the stretcher was leveled out again and set down with a squash in the mud. The bearers stretched themselves, working their bodies backwards and forwards to take the kink out of their backs, and then sloshed off out of sight.

Eadie tried to raise his head so that he could see where he was, but found that it had suddenly taken on the weight of a cannon ball and so abandoned the attempt. He lay and watched the clouds driving by and let the rain tickle his cheeks and wondered if he would be taken inside before the blankets were quite wet through. For a while he could hear no sounds except the faint calls of the men bringing the wounded out of the train, and the hissing noise of men walking in the mud, and the sh-sh-sh of wet slickers. Then he heard voices louder than the rest, quite near.

"Now, listen, sergeant, I want two blankets for every one of these men. Two blankets apiece came off the train with them and two blankets apiece I must have to show for those that I'm going to leave here."

"I know that, sir, but we haven't any extra blankets. It's so cold in the wards that all our blankets are on the patients. Couldn't you get more blankets at the garage when you go there?"

Here the first speaker seemed to pray a while, in most unprayerful tones however. "By this and by that," he said finally, "if I don't get two blankets for every man that came off that train and see them piled in the cars in fifteen minutes, I'm going to have them off these wounded. I'll be eternally condemned if I'm going to be done out of two months' pay for any nit-wit pill-roller."

There was silence for quite a time, then Eadie heard the whistle of the train and some men tramped past the head of his stretcher. "We give him his blankets all right," said one, "but he didn't have time to count 'em and they're about a hundred short." There was a deal of laughter at this and then silence.

Eadie, the cool air blowing upon his hot forehead, closed his eyes. It was quite comfortable here after all, a thousand times better than that cursed train. He was disgusted and enraged to have his rest broken into by more voices, one conciliating, the other wrathful and loud.

"God damn it, there's no excuse for leaving these men here in the rain. I don't care what they told you! Here are seriously wounded men, and there are the wards; your duty is plain. Go around and shove all the patients that can stand it into tents. Shove 'em out whether they can stand it or not, but get these men under cover! There's room for 'em somewhere!"

"I know, colonel," said the conciliating voice, "but there isn't an empty bed in the hospital!"

"Well, you empty some! That will be your job! Meanwhile put these men on the floor, or under the beds, or anywhere to get them under cover. Hold out your hands. Feel that? That's rain. It's wet, just like you are!"

"Oh, no, colonel, I've got on my slicker!"

"Oh, God!" choked the loud speaker helplessly. He went pounding vigorously away.

Another journey by stretcher into a queer low-roofed building, like a sectional barrack, only built of brick, with tiny opaque glass windows. The struts of the roof were new and naked and Eadie, laid down upon the cement floor, found himself in a narrow aisle between two rows of beds. These beds were all decorated with some kind of overhead construction, with weights and pulleys and all sorts of things, like the framework of a skyscraper. This

must be a fracture ward and these ropes and scaffolds were for the supporting of injured limbs. A nurse was making up beds.

"Hi!" said Eadie weakly. "How's chances on something to drink?"

The nurse did not seem overjoyed at being interrupted in her work, but she went away and presently returned with a tin cup and a slice of bread and jam. Eadie bit on this bread. It tasted like a mouthful of ashes. Ashes! That was all he could think of. He could not swallow it. The coffee in the cup he tried, but it was cold and had a frightful taste. He put both bread and cup down beside the stretcher.

A man in a long white coat, evidently a doctor, had been busy with a dressing when Eadie had been carried in. He finished his patient and then came down and looked at Eadie.

"Where did this man come from?" asked the doctor, wrinkling his nose.

"The bearers brought him in."

"Where are you hurt, soldier?"

"In the belly," said Eadie huskily..

"Well, this is a fracture ward. Come on, take this man out of here!"

There was an orderly who had his head over the doctor's shoulder and to him the doctor turned.

"Go get Jacobs and take this man away," he directed.

"Where will we take him to, sir?"

"I don't care where you take him. Get him out of this ward. I'm not going to have him here smelling my ward all up."

"But——"

"Do you understand English?"

The orderly departed and likewise the doctor.

Out into the cold they took the sergeant, there was

a great deal of bumping over rough ground, grunting from the stretcher bearers, and finally they entered a tent, a long green affair, that was used to house wards in field hospitals, but which now seemed to contain some of the hospital personnel. The personnel or convalescents, whichever they were, had been sitting about on cots, fully dressed and with their overcoat collars turned up. They began to go away after Eadie had been brought in.

"Who said to bring him in here?" demanded some one, who seemed to be in charge.

"Doctor Lake."

"Why, he's sick, this isn't any place for a man in that shape!"

"Well, you tell the doctor that. He gave us our orders."

"Put him on the bed by the door."

"And move the bed outside," suggested some one.

They transferred the sergeant to a bed near the door. The door was, of course, but a hole in the side of the tent, and the wind and rain drove in. A leg of the bed was broken and the sergeant's feet were higher than his head, while his body sagged toward the corner where the broken leg was. A young man, hardly more than a boy, who was probably the orderly in charge of the tent, came and stood beside the bed.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"Rotten," answered Eadie.

"Want anything to eat?"

"I couldn't eat a thing. How long have I got to stay here?"

"I don't know. This is a convalescent tent. Probably they haven't got any room in the wards."

"Tell me," asked the sergeant. "Do I smell a little ripe?"

"Yes," said the orderly soberly, "you do."

"I haven't had my wound dressed for five days," said Eadie, "and it's a belly wound, too. I suppose it is a little high, but I don't notice it myself."

"I'm going over to the office," said the orderly energetically, "and tell them to look after you. There's a mistake somewhere. I'll be right back."

While he was gone Eadie began to suffer. A man's nerve breaks down after a while under the stress of pain as it does under the stress of battle. It was bitter cold in that tent and the sergeant was chilled. He was soaking wet from the rain or the discharges of his wound. His position was decidedly uncomfortable, for he was on a sharp slope and kept slipping inch by inch, so that he feared eventually he would fall off the bed onto the grass.

The orderly returned, but he had no news for the sergeant. The men in the tent went to dinner, they returned and smoked cigarettes, then some of them went away announcing their intention of going to town and seeing the sights. The orderly sent twice to the office and went again himself without result. Eadie suffered terribly.

A long time after dinner, when it was already growing dark, a fat man appeared with two stretcher bearers.

"Where's the sick man?" he called in a hearty voice.

Eadie scarcely felt himself being placed on the stretcher, nor the swaying and jolting of the journey to the ward. A real ward they brought him to, a brick-walled, opaque-windowed place like the fracture ward, but the beds were without the overhead framework. They slid the sergeant into a bed in a corner, covered him up and left him.

The ward was a quiet, comfortable sort of place. There was no noise such as there had been in the evacuation hospital, no cigarette smoke, no movement. Overhead Eadie could see the rough boards of the roof, full of cracks and knotholes. His was the last bed on the left side of the ward and beyond him was an open room, containing a

large wooden table, some kerosene stoves, and piles of dressings under glass cases. Across the aisle was a solid brick partition, with a half-open door opening onto the aisle. This was probably an office. The walls were of cement for a distance of two or three feet from the ground, and above that naked brick. There was no sign of any arrangement for heating.

It was a bare enough place, thought Eadie, but he was here for a while and would not have to make any more journeys by hospital train. The roof had cracks in it, through which one could see tar paper, but it, at least, kept out the rain. The bed might be hard or it might be soft, he was no judge. It was softer than the ground, and a man could sleep in it with never a thought of shell or bomb or slinking raiding party hunting for throats to cut. Well, he was glad he had arrived. Things might be a little rough at first, but they always straightened out.

The sergeant felt really at peace with the world. Solid comfort, that was what he was enjoying, for the first time since he had been in the army. Let reveille be at five-thirty to-morrow, or at noon, he did not care, he would not have to go. Let the war rage and the big shove succeed or fail, he was out of it for the winter. No guard to stand, no horse to worry about, no infantry to find, no officers to bedevil him, no enlisted men to see how much they could get away with. All over. Jake appeared and sat down upon the opposite bunk, where he lined his jaws with snuff and, producing a plug of tobacco, bit off a piece.

"I haven't seen you do that since we were on the transport," said Eadie.

Jake made no reply, but got to his feet and turned back Eadie's blankets with his hairy hand.

"Here!" cried Eadie. "What do you think you're going to do?"

"I'm going to dress your wound," said Jake.

"You'll play hell dressing my wound, you big jughead!" cried Eadie, struggling to yell the way men do in dreams. "I wouldn't let you put iodine on a boil!"

Jake, however, continued his arranging of the blankets. Eadie, turning his head, discovered that there was a nurse on the other side of the bed, holding a great basin and this nurse was abetting Jake.

"Are you all drunk?" cried Eadie. "Don't you see that this man isn't competent to do a dressing? God knows he knows as much about being a doctor as some I've seen since I've been in the army, but that's no reason he's fit to undo all my stitching."

The bandages and a number of pillow-like pads were removed from Eadie's middle and Jake, skillfully enough, was washing off the sergeant's stomach. Then he flourished a pair of tongs and Eadie, watching as though he were another man, saw the tongs take out a long section of rubber hose, a yard or so of gauze, and then a great number of balls of cotton. In would go the long tongs, in to the hilt, and out they would come with a roll of cotton in their jaws. Eadie was fascinated. There must be some kind of magic here.

"Listen, Jake," he said finally, "let me see you take a rabbit out of there."

"If you were a well man," said Jake gruffly, "I'd slap your jaws for you."

"You'll make little ones out of big ones for the next couple of years if you make a pass at me. I'm a sergeant, sick or well, and don't forget it for a minute."

Jake irrelevantly began to roll dice on Eadie's stomach, rolling them around and around, but never calling his point. The nurse watched the procedure calmly.

"I thought you were dead, Jake," said Eadie. "Where have you been goldbricking so long?"

"You'll never know," replied Jake. He removed his rubber gloves, put on a cap, and began to fumble in his pocket for a cigarette. "They did a poor job on you up there," he continued. "When that stops suppurating I'll cut it open again and do a better one."

"You'll play hell!" said Eadie with energy. Jake made no reply, but went away, rubbing his freckled hands as if to warm them. The nurse who had assisted him replaced Eadie's blankets.

The ward was warm, quiet, restful. The sergeant felt sleep stealing over him, a complete perfect restfulness such as he had never known before. He did not want to sleep, however, he wanted to stay awake and enjoy the sensation. That drunken Jake, having the nerve to dress a man's wounds! Well, hospital was a soft place to be after all. Better than spending the winter up there in the cold mud.

"How do you feel, soldier?"

Eadie turned. There was another nurse smiling at him, one he had not seen before, but the thing that astonished him most was that she was attractive, not to say beautiful. He had not thought there were any young and pretty nurses in France. He had never seen any before.

"Great!" answered the sergeant, "except that my feet are cold."

"I'll fix that," said the nurse. "Would you like an egg nog?"

"I'll say I would!"

"Leave it to me!" smiled the nurse. She was back in a few minutes, with a basket full of hot water bottles. These she shoved against various parts of the sergeant's frame, then she whisked away again, to return with the egg nog. It tasted good and Eadie would have downed

it at one gulp, but the nurse would not let him. She supported him on her shoulder and made him sip it.

"I'm a good-looking guy if I have a shave once a month or so," observed the sergeant. The nurse laughed merrily and the egg nog having all disappeared, she had one of his feet off the hot water bottle and began to massage it with expert hands.

"You needn't go trying to pull my leg," said Eadie, "I haven't been paid for eight months."

Again the nurse laughed. She rubbed and kneaded, stopped to take the sergeant's pulse and then began on the other leg. Eadie's feet began to tingle and his legs to hurt. His feeling of deep comfort began to melt away and changed into one of irritation and unrest. His wound began to ache and each time that the nurse rubbed her hand on him, it shoved him a bit, and the stitches tugged on him like so many fish hooks. He began to feel as though he had been broken into fifty parts.

"Hey, lay off, will you?" he finally demanded irritably. "I felt all right until you started to monkey around. You're making me sick!"

"Am I?" cried the nurse joyfully. "Do you feel rotten? Good!"

"Good? How come? Good? Say, maybe you don't think I've got a bad wound. Read my card!" But the nurse was gone after a fresh set of hot water bottles.

Eadie raged and pleaded alternately. His wound began to pain him terribly. He discovered that the ward, after all, was cold as ice, that some men were playing cards at the far end of it, talking loudly, that a man a few beds away was whistling. A door somewhere kept slamming and he could hear the rattling of pans.

"Lay off!" cried Eadie. "For Christ's sake, leave me alone! I was all set to go to sleep and you've got me stirred up so that I won't sleep for a month!"

"You were set for a good long sleep," replied the nurse, "but you don't know how long it was going to be. Now! I've got a pulse started on you and you've begun to take an interest in life. I'll pour a bowl of hot soup down you and see if that doesn't make you a little more amiable."

The soup went down, but it only increased Eadie's disgust with things in general. The man a few beds away still whistled.

"Say, cut out that goddamned whistling!" yelled the sergeant, making a great effort.

The whistling stopped. "Who the hell told you you owned the ward?" demanded the whistler. He nevertheless whistled no more.

"Who's that bellyachin'?" asked some one.

"Aw, it's that guy in Number One," replied the whistler. "He's got appendicitis an' he thinks he's got a right to go bellerin' around at real wounded men."

Chapter X

FURTHER TREATMENT OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

THERE was no monotony in hospital life in that hospital. Eadie slept most of the first week, but after that he began to take a livelier interest in everything. Reveille was at seven o'clock every morning, and consisted of an orderly appearing beside a man's bed and pounding upon a wash basin. When the man awakened, he was given a basin full of water and allowed to wash himself. When the task was completed, the orderly went to the next bed and repeated the operation. Breakfast was at eight—a bowl of cream of wheat with a spoonful of molasses, also one mug of black fluid called coffee. There was sometimes evidence that rodents had been nibbling at the breakfast food, but then, as the head nurse remarked, a man was not compelled to eat it. If he wanted to leave it and wait for dinner nothing would be said.

There were fifty-two beds in the ward, with three nurses. The head nurse fought with the other nurses and with the patients all day, the second nurse—it was she who had taken care of Eadie the first day—made the beds, washed the patients, took temperatures, swept the floor, and made herself useful. The third nurse was the doctor's assistant. She went around with the butcher cart every morning and was busy all afternoon making pads and dressings for the next day. The personnel of the hospital were boys from some eastern college. Some

old grad had addressed a mass meeting at the college and asked for volunteers for a unit that was to go immediately overseas. What the unit was to be he did not say. It went overseas, too, and "took over" this nice new base hospital. The boys found that their part in the war was to perform menial tasks for wounded men, and since they could not revenge themselves on the men who had lured them into the army, they took it out on the patients.

After breakfast the slam of a door and a hurried irritated voice asking if everything was ready, announced the arrival of the doctor. Then would come creaking of wheels and a rattling of glassware. The butcher's cart, a rubber-wheeled affair bearing instruments, dressings, and various utensils for the catching of blood or the bathing of wounds would appear, shoved by an orderly. The doctor would put on his rubber gloves, be tied into his apron by the nurse, and proceed with the dressing of the wounds. Eadie, being in Number One bed, was always the first victim. The other members of the ward watched and waited. There was no merriment, no interest in anything but the approach of the doctor, and when any man groaned or cried out, every one in the ward trembled in sympathy. They knew they would get theirs in turn. Eadie usually gave them something to think about, for he had a deep wound, into which a pair of tongs a foot long was plunged again and again, and moreover the doctor had never forgiven him for the things he had said the first afternoon, when Eadie, semi-delirious, had thought the doctor was Jake. The doctor bore no resemblance to Jake except that he smoked incessantly.

The dressings were all changed by dinner-time, which meal usually consisted of bully beef and boiled potatoes, or soup for the liquid diets. Day after day the same things, varied by prunes or canned apricots for dessert

on Wednesdays and Sundays. In the afternoon the patients slept, or read, or visited with each other. For supper beans and canned tomatoes, or corned beef hash—canned—and canned tomatoes. The lights went out at nine o'clock and the patients could sleep.

Ah! they could sleep, but——! A man named Carrel and another named Dakin had invented a fluid that kept a wound from suppurating and assisted granulation. This fluid must be injected into the wound every two hours night and day, by means of a number of rubber tubes that remained permanently in the wound. In the daytime it was not bad, but in the cold darkness of the winter night—the nights are very cold in France, even in summer—the man had to be dragged from sleep every two hours and this liquid injected. It could not be warmed, for that would destroy its properties. Eadie had four tubes in him, but some men had eight or ten, even more. When the orderly or nurse awakened them they would swear terribly, cry out at the bite of the icy Dakin, then drift to sleep again to be aroused two hours later for the same performance.

The night orderly was a man who made up for all the deficiencies of his fellows. A faint whisper, "Orderly," and he was there at the bedside. He had bought himself felt slippers to deaden the sound of his footsteps on the floor. If a man felt ragged during the night, or was suffering, or thirsty, or cold, or just lonely and homesick, the orderly was there to do what he could. He brought up food from the officers' ward for the seriously ill, not telling that he had begged this food for himself from his brother, who was orderly in the officers' ward. He wrote letters, he shaved, he smuggled in wine, always patient, always smiling, always working. Every man in the ward harbored two ambitions, two projects for the day when he was a well man. One was to beat the day orderly into

a red mush and the other to give the night orderly the best drunk he had ever had in his life.

The really interesting time began after Eadie could sit up. The first day he sat up a minute, the second ten, and by the end of a week he could sit up for a whole morning. He began then to make acquaintances. His name, he found, was Number One, the men in the ward being designated by the number of their beds. There was a man a little way down the ward called the Regular, another the Marine, an Italian who had lost his leg was called Garibaldi. There was a man known as Forty whose voice Eadie had learned to recognize during the weeks when the sergeant had lain on his back. There were also four German prisoners in the ward, all badly wounded. There was no love lost between the Americans and the Germans. The latter had no friend but the head nurse, who spoke to them cheeringly, and went out of her way to be agreeable to them. She was perhaps strengthened in this course by the outspoken disgust with which the Americans regarded it.

A morning arrived, then, some time after Eadie had been sitting up, when he really felt at peace with the world. The breakfast having less caraway seed in it than usual, he had eaten a hearty meal and so felt the need of tobacco. He regarded his watch. Five minutes of eight. A man was not allowed to smoke before eight o'clock, but what were three or four minutes? He selected a cigarette from a package his friend the nurse had given him and lighted it. A long drag and a cloud of smoke rolled out into the aisle. There was a swish of skirts.

"Ah!" said the head nurse in a tone of satisfaction, "I caught you, didn't I?"

"Yup," agreed the sergeant, puffing, "two minutes of eight."

The outside door banged then, announcing the arrival of the doctor, so she went out with no more ado. Eadie dragged on the cigarette. "I bet she turns you in for that," announced the Regular grimly.

"Aw, no," answered the sergeant, "she isn't so bad as you birds try to make out. She never did anything rough to me and she wouldn't to you if you didn't belly-ache every time she says, 'Good morning' to those jerries."

No one said anything, but one or two laughed a little. Then the office door slammed and the doctor seemed to leap at Eadie. Behind him was the head nurse. Two jumps and they were at the foot of the sergeant's bed.

"You were smoking this morning before hours, weren't you?" yelled the doctor. "Don't lie, the nurse saw you. What did you do it for? Never mind. Don't you smoke again while you're in this ward. Not once. If you do, I'll have you out of that bed and on the rockpile. Understand?"

"Yessir," said the sergeant meekly.

The doctor turned abruptly and went back into the office. The nurse followed him. There was a low murmur of laughter from all the other beds. "You're getting better," said the Regular.

"That's right," boomed Number Forty from down the ward, "the first sign of recovery in this ward is to have a fight with the head nurse."

"Yeh, she turned in Roarin' Forty yesterday to the O. D. for something—talkin' back about the chow, I guess."

"Whad they do to you, Forty?" asked some one.

"I don't know yet. I'm goin' to get a trial when I get better. They ought to give me a vote of thanks."

"What did he say?" Eadie inquired of the ward in general.

"Haha!" replied several at once. "He said he wanted some more jam. You know *him*. He bellyached till she come down the ward and wanted to know what he was yellin' about. 'I want some more jelly,' he says. 'Ain't no more,' she says. 'I didn't have enough to put in my eye,' he says. 'Too much jam ain't good for yuh,' she says. "This ward gets too much, that's why the men in it are such softies.' 'The ward don't get a hell of a lot,' he says, 'because one orderly an' the head nurse can eat up a whole issue of it, an' have often.' Then she goes for the O. D."

"It's true, too," yelled Forty. "I've seen 'em. When they had me in that little room to die I could look out through the door into the kitchen. An' the orderlies scoffin' the light diets' chicken Sunday nights."

"Chicken? What do you mean chicken?" demanded Eadie. "When do they have chicken here?"

"Aw, this was before your time," said the Regular. "We didn't have it so bad here till all you hombres started runnin' around gettin' yourselves shot up in them Oregon woods."

"Naw, it ain't so!" cried some one else, "because after Shatter Theery we didn't get nothin' to eat here for months but bully beef right out the can. I *know!* We didn't have no pajamas neither. The guys were all lyin' around raw."

The butcher cart approached with a rattle and the dressings began. They seemed to be more hurried than usual. There was a tiny stove about a foot in diameter that heated the ward, the water for the men's baths, the water for washing and the water for dressings. The top of it always bore a bucket and this bucket belonged to the first that removed it. Since the surgical nurse wanted it for dressings and the old Frenchwoman that washed dishes wanted it for that, and the ward nurse wanted *it*

for baths, there were always two disappointed, and harsh words passed. Eadie had early made friends with the Frenchwoman, since he could speak French, and when the head nurse wanted to give instructions for the day to Annie, as the Frenchwoman was known in the ward, she did it through Eadie. He was tempted several times to translate literally the woman's remarks to the head nurse, but he desisted. It would have meant the loss of her job to Annie and a probable trial for the sergeant.

On this morning, however, the surgical nurse, instead of sneaking up quietly and rushing upon the bucket, came down the aisle holding Annie by the hand, and directed the Frenchwoman to take the hot water first.

"What's going on?" asked Eadie, as Annie went by the foot of the bed.

"Ah," replied Annie, "there's going to be an inspection. A general. I wish I could speak English, I'd tell the general what a salotte he has for a head nurse."

"What's the idea in giving you the bucket first?" asked Eadie. "They afraid you'll *musique* on 'em?"

"No, they want me to get the dishes all washed up before the general comes," answered Annie, displaying her three teeth. "She—andouille that she is—is going to give me three well men to help."

"I bet that gets to be a habit with her," muttered the sergeant, "I'm glad I'm sick."

The dressings were hurried through with, the orderly frantically swept the floor until one could hardly see for the dust, the beds were straightened and the head nurse sat down breathlessly to wait for the inspector. He arrived suddenly, accompanied by several other officers, slammed open the door, and followed by his staff or guides or assistants, or whatnot, he walked through the ward as fast as a man might without actually running. He glanced quickly to right and left as he walked along

and was probably one of those who can tell at a glance if everything is in its proper place, for one glance was all he gave. Before the men in the ward had really time to draw a second breath he was gone and the door at the far end of the ward slammed behind him. The head nurse, who had trotted in his wake, turned with a sigh of relief.

"Hey," yelled the Regular, coming to his senses now that it was too late, "call that bird back here. I want to tell him I ain't gettin' enough to eat!"

"That's right!" called some more, "where's the fire? He went through here like he'd just heard payday blown. How come we ain't got no sheets? It's gettin' tiresome sleepin' between scratchy blankets."

"I don't give a damn about the blankets," yelled some man the length of the ward, "food is what I want. Nobody gets anything to eat in this ward but the jerry prisoners and I want some one should know of it!"

"All of you shut up!" said the nurse vehemently. "If any of you had yelled at the inspector you would have regretted it, I assure you! That means you! And you, too! Soldiers! I never saw such children in my life! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! I don't want to hear any more remarks about the prisoners either! Suppose *you* were prisoners, yourselves! Don't forget that there are a lot of roads to be built around here and that for men that claim they're too sick to build roads there are convalescent tents to sleep in. It's not very warm out in those tents either! Now not another word out of you two!" She glared at the Regular and the man who had yelled so loudly, then she swung suddenly about and walked quickly to the bedside of Roaring Forty.

"And I don't want a word out of you either!" she snapped.

"I didn't say anything," protested Forty.

"Well, I don't want you to either."

"That so? Well now I could if I felt like it!" cried Forty.

"Well, you'd better not feel like it," brandishing her fist in Forty's face.

"I didn't say anything all this time," yelled Forty, "but I will now! There's fifty-two Americans in this ward that are getting a raw deal, and you hanging round the prisoners all the time. A month ago those birds were trying to kill us! If it wasn't for them or some like 'em we wouldn't be here. What the hell! Why don't you mooch a little chow out of the officers' ward for us an' give the jerries what we get to eat? An' you rubbin' that damned Hun down with alcohol every night! There's Number One, with his belly all slit open like a herrin's an' he ain't had a bath since before the drive started. How long's he been in the ward? Three weeks!"

"All right," said the head nurse, controlling herself with difficulty, "I'll get you a chance to talk to the general that you won't like. The general that you'll see will be general court-martial!" She stalked vigorously away down the ward, her hair flying. At Eadie's bed she paused.

"Is that true that you haven't had a bath since you came in off the field?" she demanded.

"Yes, it's true," replied Eadie.

"Well, why didn't you ask for one? Have I got to follow you up like a child? The day nurse is hanging around you all the time, why don't you ask her? I'll bet you weren't so particular about a bath before you came in the army!"

"I asked her," said Eadie, "but I can't take a bath in cold water, can I? These men have to shave and by the time Annie has got her dishes washed and a few goldbrick nurses have filled up their hot water bottles, it's

too late for a bath. It takes half a day for a bucket of water to lose its chill, let alone getting warm!"

The head nurse tightened her lips and left without replying.

"She's gone for the O. D.," said the Regular. "She must be a popular old bird up around the officers' mess. She's always draggin' some one out o' there just at dinner-time to come down here and bawl us out."

The O. D. arrived, sure enough, and held a long conversation with Forty. The O. D. explained that it was unchivalrous to be rude to a woman, that the hospital was overcrowded, its personnel was new and unaccustomed to its duties, that food was very short in France, and all the best of it must naturally be sent up to the lines for the combat troops. He furthermore announced that he did not care to tramp half a mile from the officers' quarters to the ward to calm obstreperous soldiers very often, and that if he was called again, the obstreperous man would be shifted from the ward to a cold convalescent tent, regardless of his condition. The head nurse stood by and listened with satisfaction.

"There now," exclaimed the head nurse after the O. D. had gone, "watch yourselves. Any freshness or any remarks about the prisoners and out you go." On her way back to the office she paused by Eadie's bed. "That goes for you, too," she said. "If I catch you smoking again, out in the cold for you."

"It might be worth it," answered the sergeant. "I might get the treatment a seriously wounded man is entitled to out there."

"Seriously wounded?" cried the head nurse, "you goldbrick! All you've got is an incision hardly as big as an appendectomy. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for staying in hospital with it! Look at Number Ten with his leg full of tubes, and the Marine there, six

months in bed from a bayonet through the body! Seriously wounded! Who said you were? Look at Featherstone, with his back blown off right down to the ribs. He hasn't turned over or lifted an arm since June! See that man in Twenty-eight bed? He hasn't got any face, but they're making him a new one out of his own hand. See his hand up to his jaw? The palm is growing on to the place where his cheek ought to be, and every six weeks they cut his hand away and stick it on in a new place! That man's got a wound! You don't hear him complaining, do you?"

"I would if I could talk, you old bitch!" mumbled the man whose hand was growing to his face.

The nurse turned with an exclamation and they heard her running down the corridor.

"Run fast," roared Forty, "you'll catch the O. D. before he gets out of sight!"

The ward rocked with laughter.

From then on there was war to the knife between the head nurse and the patients. If she caught any one smoking before or after the allowed time, even so much as a minute, he lost his smoking privilege. Men were ruthlessly sent out to convalescent tents long before they were in fit condition to stand the damp cold of a winter in the open. From this there was no escape, for trains full of wounded came in twice a week, and those who had recovered somewhat from their hurts must make way for the newly stricken. The head nurse was the one who decided and it was noticeable that her few friends, no matter how nearly recovered they were, stayed on in the ward while others less able went out. The most flagrant case among the friends of the head nurse was a boy of nineteen or so, known as Irish. Poor lad, he had been brought up by his grandmother and had never slept away from home until the draft caught him and swept

him away to France. He had a flesh wound in the arm received in an air raid a hundred kilometers or so behind the lines, after he had been only three weeks in France. Week after week Irish stayed in the ward and other men went out to the tent. No one cared very much, for the poor boy would excite pity in any breast, but one day the orderlies took Forty out of bed and carried him to a tent. The next morning Irish was gone and Forty was in his bed in the ward. Irish might have walked out, but who had carried Forty in again? There was what is known in army circles as a "stink" about the affair, but Forty stayed in the ward and the men counted it a victory over the head nurse. She had her revenge later, for diphtheria broke out in the hospital and every one in the ward received an injection of antitoxin. The men suffered frightfully, the place resounded with groans like those from a torture chamber. The antitoxin was injected in the stomach and caused the most excruciating pain in about an hour. The head nurse was highly amused and walked up and down chuckling.

"Well, well," she exclaimed, "I thought you were soldiers. I haven't heard such a racket since I was in charge of a baby ward." The wounded ground their teeth.

The signing of the Armistice caused little commotion. A girl from the Red Cross entered the ward one day and announced that the war was over. Few of the men believed it and the rest took no interest one way or the other. The war was over for them, anyway, and had been for some time.

"We'll be sorry the war is over yet," prophesied Forty. "We'll get less work out of 'em now than ever."

He was right. The personnel, the night of the armistice, all left the hospital to take care of itself and went to the nearest town to celebrate. In the days that fol-

lowed, they expected that they would be sent home immediately and vented their feelings of disappointment on the patients. Eadie's friend, the nurse who had saved his life the first day he had been in the ward, got herself transferred to another ward where the head nurse was less disagreeable. The closing of the field and evacuation hospitals and the arrival of fresh personnel from home allowed more nurses to the ward, but there was less work done than before. The nurses at the field hospitals felt they had done their bit by working two and three days at a stretch without rest and that now the war was over they had a right to rest. The newly arrived nurses did not agree with this view, and since no one else did any work, did not see why they should. Meanwhile the wounded died.

"By God," cried the Regular one morning, "a week from to-day is Thanksgiving Day. I wonder if we get any turkey."

"Yep," spoke up a man, "it says in the Stars and Stripes that there'll be a turkey for every man in the A. E. F. I was just readin' it. It says they come over from the States in refrigerator ships, one for each of us, with fixin's."

"The best reason for not believin' that," remarked Forty, "is that you seen it in the Stars and Stripes."

"Hey, orderly," called Eadie, "what do you know about it? Do you see any signs of turkey around the hospital?"

"I don't know," said the orderly. "I'll ask the mess sergeant at dinner. The detachment commander made us a spiel Sunday and said that we were going to have turkey with all the fixings, but he told us about twice a week all last summer that we were going up to the front in ten days, so it's hard to believe him now."

"Well, speakin' of turkey," remarked Forty, "see if you could find me a duck."

Three days after, a convalescent who had come into the ward to visit a friend, was prevailed upon to pay a visit of reconnaissance to the hospital kitchen. He returned with the glorious statement that the place was full of turkeys and that the cook's police were busy unpacking them and preparing them for the big day.

"I don't believe it yet," said Eadie. "I've always played in hard luck on getting big feeds since I've been in the army. When we were at Camp Shelby a year ago, our mess sergeant ran off with all the battery funds and we had to eat what the quartermaster issued us. It didn't include turkey either. Then at Christmas I was in hospital on liquid diet."

"Me, too," agreed another man. "When I got that turkey right in my hand I'll believe it."

"Naw, but I tell yuh I seen the birds bein' fixed up," protested the scout. "They were makin' stuffin' an' everything."

"That might be," said the other, "but they might be gettin' 'em ready for the nurses, or for the doctors, or for the officers' ward."

The Red Cross functioned well in that hospital. They furnished most of the bandages and dressings and every so often a girl would visit the wards and give every man a piece of home-made fudge. One piece was not much, but it was all the sugar the wounded got and they were pleased enough. Thanksgiving morning an orchestra visited each ward, under the auspices of the Red Cross, and rendered appropriate music. The orchestra was composed of a flute, a violin, and a bull fiddle, all local talent, and they could only play two pieces, both of rather a doleful nature, but they were well received by the inmates of the ward. The wounded were looking forward to dinner, and anything that served to pass the time was welcome. Would they or would they not have turkey for

dinner? The head nurse informed those that questioned her that she had other things on her mind than what the men would eat for dinner, the orderly declared that he had seen turkeys being dressed, and that the personnel were planning on a turkey dinner, but as to whether or not the men in the ward would get turkey, he did not know. Eadie intended to ask his nurse friend, but she had not paid him a visit for some time and so he had not been able to.

At twelve the orderly put away his broom and left for the kitchen. The food was brought from the kitchen to the ward in a huge tray containing covered dishes. This food was then portioned out in the ward kitchen and served to the men.

"Who wants to bet me we get canned willie?" demanded Forty.

"No, sir," announced an unseen speaker, "we're goin' to have turkey. I'd bet you but I ain't been paid since July an' I ain't liable to be with my organization till next July, so I won't draw no money until then. I tell yuh what I'll do though. I'll bet yuh my share o' the bully beef that we have turkey. If we have bully, you can have my share."

"An' if we have turk you can have mine? Fat chance. Heads I win, tails you lose."

"Aw, shut up, you two!" growled the Regular. "What's the use of gettin' all het up? If we have turk we have it an' if we don't we'll be mad enough without gettin' our mouth all set for it. I don't believe we'll get it. There's two million soldadoes in France an' ther ain't that many turks in the world. If ther was, they'd have to have a fleet o' transports to bring 'em over in."

The outside door banged. The men heard the hurrying step of the orderly in the corridor, heard him enter the ward kitchen, and the slam of the food tray on the

table. Scrape, scrape went a spoon. The orderly appeared again, a plate in each hand. A happy cry burst from every throat. There was turkey on each plate, turkey, brown and inviting, flanked by the white of mashed potato and the red of cranberry sauce. But how come? Eadie, being in Number One bed, and so nearest the door, should be served first, and the man opposite him next. That was the usual order, but this time the orderly bore those steaming dishes down the ward and gave them to two men at the far end. There was a heavy silence. The orderly went back to the ward kitchen, two more plates of turkey appeared, one going to a German prisoner and the other to a notorious goldbrick, a friend of the head nurse. Murmurs from the other men in the ward. Two more plates of turkey, to two men recently arrived.

"What's the grand idea in not serving us in order?" demanded Eadie finally.

"Bring yours in next," said the orderly. True to his word he did. The eyes of every man in the ward were on the end of the corridor, and they followed the plate from the time the orderly appeared until he put it down beside some one's bed, then their eyes followed him out of sight again. Every man saw the orderly appear with Eadie's plate, every man, save those already eating, looked to see what was on it. Whatever it was, it was not turkey. Eadie's shout of anger told them what he had received.

"Canned asparagus and beans!"

The man opposite Eadie received the same thing, so did the next man. The Regular, the Marine, Forty, all the other men in the ward, asparagus, cold and tasteless, and the old army stand-by, canned beans. There was a roar of protest that swelled louder as each man was served. The head nurse came in and commanded silence.

but could not make herself heard above the uproar. Forty descended from his bed, and dragging himself along from one cot to the next, was about to assault a German prisoner, when the orderly and the nurse restrained him and hustled him back to bed again. Every one talked at once, some wept tears of rage, others howled with impotent wrath, some hurled their plates crashingly to the cement floor, beans and all. Finally they quieted down, for they were sick men after all, and had not a great deal of endurance.

"What's the matter with you men?" demanded the head nurse when she could make herself heard, "are you all crazy? What do you mean by breaking those plates? What do you mean by yelling like this? I never heard of such a thing in my life! You, Forty, you've got enough chalked up against you already to keep you in the guardhouse the rest of your life! Number One, you're always starting something, you're at the bottom of this! You were the first man served! I'll report you for this! What do you mean by making such a row?"

"I've got a right to make a row!" replied Eadie hotly, ready to weep bitter tears in disappointment and rage. "What the hell do you mean by giving turkey to the prisoners and your bootlicking, camouflaging pets and putting out beans to the rest of us? By God, if you were a man I'd get right up out of this bed and take a round out of you, I don't care if my guts fell out and hung down around my feet!"

"Is that what the trouble is?" asked the head nurse. She laughed a little rippling laugh and the ward ground its teeth at the sound. "The prisoners and my goldbricking friends get turkey and the rest of you don't? But you men are all on light diet. It's only the men on full diet that get turkey."

Ah, so that was it! Oh, bitter peeve! How well they

remembered now, those men, that the nurse had transferred this one and that one from full to light diet during the past week. There had been no complaint because the full diets ate heartily of bully beef, hardtack and canned hash, while the light diets had delicacies like canned asparagus, jam, and stewed chicken on Sunday night. But now! Only the full diets to have turkey! Wrath and foam. The men in the ward could hear the head nurse strangling with laughter in the office.

Eadie lay down in his bed and covered his head with the blankets. His plate lay on the bedside table untouched, while his heart burned within him. What did a man get for going to war? What did it get him to risk his life in battle? If he was killed, a hasty burial, and if he was wounded, a trip to a hell like this hospital. He had been treated much better the time he had been gassed, than now that he was seriously wounded. Seriously wounded!

"What's the matter with you, appendicitis?"

"Goldbrick, you haven't got any kind of a wound. Suppose you lost a leg or an arm!"

He was one man in a ward of fifty odd seriously wounded, and the ward was one in not only a hospital, but a concentration of five similar hospitals, huddled in the cold mud of one of the most desolate sections of France. If he died he went to the morgue and if he lived and got well he would go out and spend the winter in a convalescent tent.

A hand tugged gently at the blankets about Eadie's head. He put out one eye and discovered his friend the nurse there, the one who had taken such good care of him when he first came to the ward.

"I've been sick," said the nurse, "that's why I haven't been around to see you before. What's the matter, aren't you feeling well?"

"No!" replied Eadie, "the head nurse put us all on light diet so we wouldn't get any turkey dinner. I don't mind a lot, because I was on light diet anyway, but it makes me mad to have a plate of beans shoved at me when I had my mouth all set for turkey."

"That old devil!" muttered the nurse. "If I ever meet up with that disgusting woman after the war or somewhere where there aren't any witnesses, I'll certainly give her a piece of my mind and maybe haul out a few of her hairs for her! What a dirty trick! Sometimes I wonder if she isn't deranged."

"Well, hurray for Thanksgiving Day, anyway. Maybe I'll get a good dinner for Christmas."

"Now there!" exclaimed the nurse. "I forgot what I came over here for. I was up in the office this morning and I saw an order they were getting out. Your name was on it."

"What for?" demanded Eadie in surprise. "What are they putting my name on an order for?"

"You're going back to the States on the first trainload that goes!"

"No! Is that a fact?" cried Eadie.

"It certainly is," said the nurse, "I saw the order myself."

Eadie at once sat up in bed and looked about. "Hey, orderly!" he cried, "who told you to take away that dish of beans? Bring it back! I can make out a meal with it now!"

The sergeant's recovery after that was rapid. His friend the nurse had predicted that it would be, for a belly wound either killed a man or he recovered from it, one or the other, and it took very little time for either. The tubes were removed from the wound in a few days and after he could sleep all night he rapidly gained strength. He had to learn to walk all over again like a

child, but he had plenty of time. The week before Christmas he was still in the ward, with every prospect of not leaving it for anything better than a convalescent tent. He had been issued a uniform, such as it was, but he had his collar ornaments and his whistle, and his faithful friend the nurse bought him a set of sergeant's stripes and two very glittering wound stripes. Two! There weren't many that could sport two.

One morning Eadie finished his breakfast and was in the midst of his bi-weekly shave when the head nurse came fluttering up to his bed. "Hurry up and get that finished and get ready to get out of here!" she said.

"Are you going to run me into a tent?" asked the sergeant with a sinking heart.

"No, you're going to leave the hospital. Go up to the office."

The ward was very quiet while the nurse informed three more men that they were going. Four men, that was all, and the rest of them must wait another month or so. There was no laughter. The men watched sadly while Eadie did his packing. This consisted of wiping his face and his razor, putting the razor in his musette, and taking his overcoat over his arm. He traveled light. Then he went down the ward to say his farewells.

They looked at the sergeant pathetically, for he was going home, and they were doomed to stay in the ward and fight with the head nurse. Two weeks from now, Number One would be at home in the States, at home where it was warm, and a man might eat thick steak three times a day if he so willed. Two weeks from now Number One would be in civilian clothes and need never look at a uniform again. He would be among people who were all "mister," where if a man was insulted there was nothing to hinder him from poking the insulter in the nose. He would have a civilized bed, in which a man

could turn over twice and not fall on the floor, and in which he could sleep twenty-four hours of the day with none to hinder him. Ah, to go home! What else did life hold but that?

Eadie shook hands with them all, the Regular, the Marine (he was a good guy even if he was a leatherneck), Roaring Forty, Twenty-Eight, even the newcomers and the goldbrick friends of the head nurse. He was tempted to shake hands with the prisoners, too, but it might not do, and then he knew no German with which to explain his action.

"Good-by, nurse," said he to his old enemy, the head nurse, "when I'm in New York around New Year's, I'll think of you. When I ride up Fifth Avenue on the bus, I'll think of you wading around in the mud here."

"Do that, will you?" asked the nurse pleasantly, "and when you get to wherever you're going, remember that I was the one that sent you there."

"A lot you had to do with sending me out of hospital," scoffed Eadie.

"You'd be surprised!" replied the nurse.

"By golly, if I dared to believe you I'd forgive you for all the stuff you've pulled on us the last few months."

"Good-by," said the nurse suddenly, and slammed the office door in Eadie's face.

At the loading platform the men gathered, two and three from each ward, pallid with their stay in hospital, each one hunched in his new overcoat, and each one with the little canvas bag the Red Cross had given him over his shoulder. The train was not a hospital train, but one composed of third-class carriages, the compartments of which held eight men. They did not put eight men in each, but six, so that the six might not be too crowded. The men were loaded in, some of the hospital personnel went along the train and distributed cans of hash, bully,

tomatoes, and jam, with a loaf of bread to each compartment, the doors were banged, and the train began to rattle its way to the seaboard.

Home! The first stage of the journey! The cars were cold and the seats hard and uncomfortable, but the men were going home and they would have gladly walked to the sea, weakened as they were, or crawled on hands and knees. Home! That was the place for a man. The landscape along the track was the same old country that Eadie had seen so often. Sheets of rain, swollen brooks, muddy cart tracks crawling up green hillsides, small dirty houses, wayside stations, large towns where the train changed engines, and demobilized French soldiers stood on the platform with their hands in their pockets and idly watched the train. Toward night of the first day the train stopped and the men were all bundled off and on to another. They ate supper from the cans of food they had with them, and spent the night trying to be comfortable. The second day the train wandered its way across France, all the time in the flood plain of the Loire, a flat desolate muddy section that stretches without a break in its monotony clear across France. Eadie began to know where he was now, he did not need the piles of rusty tin cans all along the tracks to tell him that he was on a great American troop route. That night they rolled into a station marked Saint Pierre des Corps, where trains for Tours leave the main line. The night they spent in the Caserne Lafayette in Tours.

Another train, another new set of companions the next day. The men were from different hospitals now, even from as far away as Contrexville. The country changed, Poitiers, Angoulême, Libourne.

"I know this country," observed Eadie. "We must be going home from Bordeaux."

"Uh huh!" agreed the other men. They had been

herded up and down the United States and all over France now for going on two years, never knowing where they were going, and having little interest in their destination anyway.

"We'll know where we're goin' when we get there," was their motto.

Bordeaux at last, the great platform of the Gare du Midi dimly lighted by the afternoon sun and crowded with American and French soldiers. The men all descended from the train and began to gather in groups, according as their names were called by two officers who had been in charge of the train since Tours. Eadie, being a sergeant, had his name toward the head of the list, and so was called early. About thirty men were finally grouped around him and the officer counting them marched them across the platform to another train.

"Where does this go?" Eadie asked the trainman as he got on.

"La Teste and Arcachon," was the reply.

"La Teste!" shrieked Eadie. "Why, we can't be going to Le Corneau!"

The trainman shrugged his shoulders. "I do not pretend to know," said he.

Eadie leaped down from the step and frantically sought the officer. "Here!" he cried. "Are we going to Le Corneau?"

"That's what," replied the officer.

"Le Corneau!" cried Eadie, so that all the men turned to look at him. "Why, that's the place I deserted from last summer to go back to the front!"

"Well, don't worry," said the officer coldly, "they'll try you for it."

"There must be some mistake," protested Eadie. "Why, I'm just out of hospital. They told me I was going home!"

"There's no mistake," observed the officer. He got out the order to make sure. "Yes, here it is; Eadie, Robert, Sergeant, 'A,' 70th Field Artillery, and at the top of the order you see, 'The following named enlisted men to report to commanding officer, F. A. R. R., Le Corneau Gironade.'"

"Ah, the bitch!" muttered Eadie, "she knew it all the time." Then he mounted the train in silence.

Chapter XI

HOME

FROM a little way south of Bordeaux almost to the Spanish border stretches a desolate waste of sand, forested with pitch pine. Shepherds live there and gatherers of pitch, and a few fishermen, and during the war the French established training camps for their Senegalese and Annamite battalions among the pines. The poorest, most out of the way, and the worst constructed of these camps was Le Corneau. Senegalese had been there, and after them the Russians, and after the Russians mutinied, had been subdued, and taken away, the camp was turned over to the Americans. Row after row of dirty, white-washed huts, sand, black with the filth and dirt of its thousands of former occupants, a brick guardhouse with no windows, and the dreary stretches of the forest, such was the camp.

A man stood at the main gate of the camp in the early hours of the morning, watching the details going out to work and the companies being marched to drill. The man was Sergeant Eadie and it was the morning after his arrival at Le Corneau. It was cold, a damp raw wind that kept the thermometer hovering around the freezing point drove before it a cold rain, and the marching men bent their heads against it. What a useless thing an overseas cap was in a rain!

Eadie had breakfasted on sour hash and bacon, with a cup full of coffee grounds to wash it down with. He had slept in his clothes and overcoat, but even then he had been cold. First call for drill had blown, and then assem-

bly, but Eadie had not assisted at roll call. He had been in this camp before and knew that it would be several days before his name would appear on the roster. He had also gone away from this camp the last time without the formality of a travel order.

"I think I'll do it again," muttered the sergeant. "It's cold, though, now, and the trains don't run to the front any more. Where would a guy go?"

Yet why rush away? He had only been here a few hours. They might be going to send him home from here after all. Le Corneau was the artillery replacement camp for the A. E. F. and would be the logical place to send an artilleryman who had no outfit. He couldn't expect to go home all by himself like a returning tourist. And his nurse friend had said she had seen his name on the order to go home. Yeh, but when? The whole A. E. F. was going home some day.

Eadie faced the other way and looked at the wall of forest across the road. The last time he had been here he used to go into those woods every day and lie up under the pines until the hour for drill was over. It had been summer then and warm. The pines looked dreary enough now, dripping with rain and swaying in the wind. Still the sergeant had better be getting under cover, for a man standing about with no evident purpose would be the prey of the first officer that went by in search of some one to cut kindling wood or dig a latrine, no matter if the man had as many stripes as a zebra on his arm. Eadie turned and moved out of the gate to the road, where he stopped to consider the best route to take.

"Get the hell back inside that gate!"

Eadie turned. There were two horsemen there, that, riding on the grass beside the road, had approached without his hearing them. They were armed with pistols and had rifles in their gun boots.

"Gwan!" snarled the man again. "Goddamn you, get the hell back there! Where the hell do you think you are, anyway?"

Eadie still looked at the two men. They were not military police, for they wore no brassards. They had campaign hats, with red hat cords, and must be a part of the permanent personnel of the camp. They had heavy, unintelligent faces and cruel mouths with tobacco-stained lips. One of the men spurred his horse toward the sergeant and kicked at him savagely with his spurred heel. Eadie turned and went back inside the gate. What good would it do him to stay in the road to resist those two brutes? The guardhouse, perhaps. Even suppose he hurled a rock at one of them, the other would shoot him down. "Killed by accident," the casualty list would read. A fine ending to a military career. The mounted men looked at him a minute or two and then rode on.

"They're a fine pair o' birds, ain't they?"

Eadie turned. Another soldier stood beside him, a red-faced man, older than Eadie, and this man also wore the campaign hat that marked him as a member of the camp personnel.

"Them kind o' guys are springin' up all over France," observed the man without waiting for Eadie's answer. "The war is over an' they ain't afraid o' bein' sent up to the lines any more. War is hell, but it ain't got nothin' on peace."

"I'll say," agreed Eadie. "I've seen hard-boiled M. P.'s in my time, but I always knew that under his hard-boiled skin the M. P. was just a soldier trying to keep himself out of the guardhouse like the rest of us. But those two slave drivers! They're brutes, that's the word. Imagine Americans putting thugs like that to guard other Americans!"

"How long yuh been here?" grinned the other man.

"I've just come," said Eadie. "I was here last summer and went over the hill to get away. I'm going to do it again."

"Don't," said the other man soberly. "The guys that's A. W. O. L. is S. O. L. now. The first thing they do when they catch yuh is to pass yuh a beat in. There was a buddy o' mine that went up to Bordeaux an' hadn't more'n got off the train before they had him. He was in the Casino de Lilas a month, luggin' rails all day. Then he got sent down here an' got three months more for bein' absent in Bordeaux. It didn't make no difference that he was in the mill up there; he was gone a month an' that was enough."

"Well, what do they do with the men here now?" asked Eadie. "How long do they keep a guy here? They used to send up replacements every week, but they don't need replacements any more."

"They send wounded men here for classification," said the other. "A guy in A class goes back to his outfit, B gets duty in an office or gets a job in a camp like this, C gets convalescent camp, an' D gets sent home right off. You'll be goin' over in a day or two if you come in yesterday. The doc looks 'em over."

"Suppose a guy gets D class, how long before he'd go home?"

"Oh," said the other, "if you got D now you ought to be home for Fourth of July. How long did it take to get the A. E. F. to France? Nigh to two years. How they gonna get 'em home any quicker?"

"That's right," muttered Eadie. "It looks as if I was set to spend some time in this hell hole after all. Well, how do they eat here?"

The other man's face darkened. "Well, I'll tell yuh," he said bitterly, "it would puke a buzzard!"

"I guess it's going to be a hard winter!" remarked Eadie sadly.

"It is that," agreed the other, "but if you go tryin' to get away an' get caught, it'll be lots harder!"

Eadie went back to the cold barracks. The huts were unheated and, in addition, open to any wandering breeze. The weather was just cold enough to be raw and uncomfortable, like a rainy day in late September at home. Men sat about on the double deck bunks, their hands plunged into their coat pockets and their heads sunk into their coat collars. There were a lot of men in the huts, men marked sick in quarters, men beating drill, special duty men whose duty was not pressing for the moment, newcomers who, like Eadie, were awaiting classification. They were all strangers to each other and no one felt like making friends with his neighbor. Each wanted to be alone with his own black thoughts.

A meager dinner of slum began the afternoon. After dinner the well men marched sullenly away to drill and the sick, lame, and lazy slunk back to the cheerless huts. Only once throughout the afternoon did any one speak to Sergeant Eadie and that was when he decided to sleep, and removed his overcoat to spread over himself after he had lain down. A gloomy man on the next bunk noticed the gleam of Eadie's new wound stripes.

"Yuh got on two wound stripes?" inquired the gloomy man.

"Yes," replied Eadie.

"Yuh make two trips to hospital?" asked the other skeptically.

"Yes."

"Yuh got an order givin' yuh authority to wear 'em?"

"Horseteeth!" replied Eadie, lying down and pulling his overcoat over him.

"Yuh ain't got no right to wear 'em less yuh got an order," said the other man triumphantly.

"I'll show you the wounds if you want to see 'em!" snapped Eadie. "Who the hell are you anyway?"

The other man grunted and retired into his coat collar without further reply.

The third day of his stay in Le Corneau Eadie was summoned to the company office and ordered to report to the hospital for classification.

"Suppose a guy is classified definitely," Eadie asked the clerk, "how long before he gets shoved out of here?"

"That depends on the classification. If he gets D or C he's liable to be here for some time."

"And A or B?"

"They get sent out pretty soon," said the clerk. "We're always getting calls for men."

Eadie thought deeply as he tramped across the camp to the hospital. Desertion from the camp was impossible, he had made sure of that. No trains went out except the regular rattler to La Teste and this was as full of M. P.'s as it could pack. The roads were patrolled by cavalry, the camp provost detachment, military police, and detachments furnished by the main guard. On the other hand, life in the camp was intolerable. It had been bad enough when he had been there the first time, but now the type of soldier had changed. Before the men had been the average American, wounded from the Regular and National Guard divisions, volunteers, every one of them. Now the camp was filled with the scum of every nationality on the face of the earth, the dregs of the famous American melting pot that the long arm of the draft had stirred up. There were heavy-jowled, stolid Slavs, curly-headed Albanians and Greeks, round-headed filthy Russian Jews, Italians of the lowest sort, a crowd

of men that scarcely spoke English, dirty, undisciplined, ignorant men who addressed an officer as "boss" and a sergeant as "Hey, Jack!" They lived and ate and slept like animals and the sight of them smacking and crunching their food would turn even a soldier's stomach. What then could a man do? To go over the hill meant disaster, and to stay was impossible. Still, there might be a way. A man that could make his way through the woods at night in enemy territory ought to be able to elude a few police. But where to go? Where was the outfit? The outfit!

"I'm going back, by God!" cried Eadie suddenly. "Why didn't I think of it before?" He walked on more briskly. But could it be done? He was still very weak, he slept every afternoon, and a walk from the barracks to the camp gate exhausted him. And how about home, where a man could take off his uniform and forget it all?

"Nix," said Eadie aloud. "I'm a non-commissioned officer of the Regular Army and wherever my bunk is, is home to me."

He went into the hospital, into a large room full of men and he removed his clothes as the other men had. Three doctors stood in the circle of naked men, and the men went through various exercises, rising on their toes, extending their arms, bending down, all with the intention of displaying any loss of movement to the three doctors. Then the men leaped up and down in place for some time, and after that the doctors went about with stethoscopes listening to hearts and asking each man the nature of his wound. The doctor paused before Eadie and poked his scar with a stubby finger.

"What gave you that?" asked the doctor.

"Appendicitis," replied Eadie.

"Humm. They did a poor job on you. How do you feel?"

"Fine," replied Eadie.

"Want to go back to your outfit?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Put him down 'A,'" directed the doctor, and went on to the next man.

A week at Le Corneau! Was there any hell of battle to be compared to it? No. But the week finally passed and on the eighth day Eadie found himself acting first sergeant of a detachment of replacements for the Army of Occupation. They went away early in the afternoon in third-class cars and Eadie began his third journey to rejoin the battery. It was not like the old wartime trips, with a trainload of shouting, singing soldiers full of red wine and getting fuller every time the train stopped, with men falling out of cars and off the roofs and losing the train at stations and appearing at the next stop having caught an express, and finally disappearing for good. No, times had changed. Every station was guarded by an inflexible barrage of police. Where the tank cars full of wine used to stand unguarded there were now railway employees still in the blue of the army, and wise to all the tricks of the soldier. No more was there that rough bon camarade spirit, the "soldiers all and to hell with civilians," that Eadie had known. Every one was disgusted, every one begrudging every minute he spent in uniform. At Metz the scene suddenly changed. The slouchy French in civilian clothes and army overcoat that crowded the station platforms disappeared, and in their place appeared very snappy soldiers with bayoneted rifles, chasseurs alpins, tirailleurs, colonials in red hats, Senegalese, occasional British, and then, finally, Americans, alert, clean, well-dressed, shaven, shoes polished in spite of the mud, men to make another American weep tears of joy. Gone were the round heads, the curly heads, and the dirty heads. Americans, well-kept, in new, finely fitting uniforms.

Eadie took off his overcoat and looked critically at his own salvage blouse and breeches. Well, he would be paid at the outfit and then he was going to buy himself a new uniform, from putts to cap.

"How come you wear two wound stripes, sergeant?" asked one of the men in the compartment.

"I was wounded twice," replied Eadie coldly.

"Oh," said the other. The other men all grinned.

"It ain't nothin' to us," said a man in the corner, grinning, "only look out when you get to the outfit. I heard you tell the doctor you had appendicitis."

The next day the train rattled through suburbs that reminded a man vaguely of St. Louis or Indianapolis, clattered over a great iron bridge and came to a halt. The place swarmed with Americans. It was Coblenz, the headquarters of the Army of Occupation, a city famous as a resort and garrisoned by a Corps d'Armée before the war, the capital of the French Department of the Rhine under Napoleon, the capital of Rhenish Prussia under the Kaisers, and now the capital of the occupied area. A great place, thought Eadie, a fine place in which time would not hang heavy on a man's hands. However, no such luck. Before he had done looking around, the sergeant had been marched out of the station and loaded into a truck. By virtue of his rank he rode on the seat, but the other men had to ride inside. The replacement detachment, it appeared, had been split up upon arrival at Coblenz, those for the Fourth Division going one way, and those from the Third and Forty-second going another.

"What's the next stop?" Eadie asked the driver.

"Brigade headquarters," answered the driver shortly.

They rattled through the streets and finally came out into the snow-clad country. Eadie turned up the collar of his overcoat and shivered.

"How's the soldiering here?" he asked.

"'Tain't bad," replied the driver. "It's better'n it was in France. You a replacement?"

"No," said Eadie, "I was wounded."

"Where was you wounded?" demanded the driver suspiciously, so that Eadie gasped at his vehemence.

"Why, in the Argonne!" answered Eadie, aghast.

"Where in the Argonne?"

"At Montfaucon."

"Huh," grunted the driver, "you don't look it."

"Well, I was. I'll show you the wound if you want to see it."

"I don't want to see it," said the driver. "It ain't nothin' to me, only every goldbrick an' camouflager an' sick an' lame an' lazy gimmick that ever heard o' the Third Division is comin' back now that the war is over. 'Lots o' beer an' frauleins in Germany, let's go,' they says, and they come outta their holes where they been all through the war an' come back here with some line o' bull they was wounded or in hospital or somethin'. Huh! There's Frog Leclair, he had functional disorders every time he heard a shell burst an' it got chronic on him. They sent him out. He's back now, swellin' around with his chest out in a tailor-made uniform. His trouble don't bother him no more. They ain't no shell bursts here!"

Eadie made no reply and the truck covered several kilometers. A peasant in a high-wheeled cart took a long time to clear the road and when the driver had finished swearing at him he turned to Eadie again.

"Another thing that riles me," said the driver, "is that these here Johns show up with their arms all plastered with wound stripes, and gold stars, and canteen medals on their chests and fourragères and God knows what, and not a damn one of 'em rates ary thing! Well, the provost marshal is out for 'em now. If a man ain't got

an order for a stripe or a medal right in his pocket, he don't wear it."

"Listen," said Eadie. "What's the idea of popping off at me? I was wounded and back at the front again while you were still trying to make up your mind who the war was with. And I'm rankest sergeant of battery A of the 79th and I can put any man in this division in the can, too. I was wounded right in back of the guns and the whole damned first battalion saw me get it. Now! What do you think of that for gooseberries?"

"I wasn t sayin' nothin' about you," said the driver. "A man's got a right to speak his mind, ain't he? You got on two wound stripes, I seen 'em when you was puttin' on your coat. How the hell can a man get two wound stripes between July and November and still get back to his outfit at New Year's?"

"One of 'em's for appendicitis!" said a voice from the back of the truck.

The driver blew his horn and shifted gears for a long hill. Eadie said nothing.

Brigade headquarters was in a small town, a clean, whitewashed, low-eaved place, where stiff-backed soldiers marched solemnly down the street, coming back from drill; stern sentries with bayoneted rifles were everywhere, and stolid Germans looked curiously at Eadie. If he grinned back at them they smiled and chuckled and bobbed their heads with delight. At brigade headquarters Eadie gave his name and they sent him with an orderly down the street to a ration dump, from which a truck was soon leaving for his battalion, quartered in a neighboring town.

Again Eadie mounted the driver's seat, again the truck grunted and banged its way out of town and through the snow-covered fields. Eadie was alone and the back of the truck full of rations, so that his riding the seat did not proclaim him a non-com.

"What outfit yuh out of, buddy?" asked the new driver after a while.

"A," replied Eadie from his coat collar.

"Wounded?" asked the driver.

"NO!" barked Eadie, "I'm a replacement."

"Funny," commented the driver, "you look a lot like a sergeant outta A that got wounded."

They passed a field where a mounted band was formed on white horses. The leader's saber glittered.

"Regimental call, adjutant's call," the command came clearly across the snow. The saber dropped and the cold cry of the trumpets blared. Eadie's skin prickled. His band! That was his outfit's band!

"You c'n git off here," the driver said, slowing down the truck. "The P. C. is right down that street."

Eadie got down and then, pack in hand, looked around.

"By God, if it ain't him!" cried two voices simultaneously.

"I told yuh he'd never die as long as I had them glasses," said a third. Eadie turned. Ham, Baldy, and Short Mack fell upon his neck.

"Man, you always play in luck!" cried Ham. "Here we been here two months an' through hell an' just as they begin to let up on us a bit, in you come!"

"Come on down to the club," said Baldy. "The noncoms rate a special mess an' bein' all sergeants now, we can talk there easier than here. I been made since I seen you last. Did you have much of a time with that wound?"

"Tell the truth an' say 'no,' " advised Short Mack as they went down the street. "Tell the truth. It didn't no more than knock the wind out of yuh."

They entered a house a short distance down the street. It bore all the marks of a barroom, but inside was clean and warm.

A strongly built, blue-eyed girl appeared and grinned

at the four men. "Her mother's the cook," explained Ham.

"Vier bier!" ordered Short, sitting down at the long table.

"Schnell!" added Baldy.

"Wie gehts?" asked Ham. The three then turned their eyes questioningly on Eadie, as if to say, "whaddyuh think o' that for German, kid?"

"And you birds all speak German now!" exclaimed Eadie with admiration.

"It was tough learnin' it," said Ham. "There was a time when if you batted an eye at a German, man or woman, the mill and a six months' blind for you. It's changed a little now. The orders is still on, but we got so we can beat 'em now an' then. You sure come back in a good time."

"Boy, you were lucky you didn't make the march into Germany with us!" cried Short. "No goldbricking behind the caisson then. We changed colonels just before we started and the one we got was rarin' to make us snap out of it. You'd never know some o' the officers, they got so hard-boiled over night."

"It makes a difference with a guy when he knows that there's no chance o' some one's easin' a bullet into him in the excitement o' the fight!" remarked Baldy.

"Shut up!" cried Short. "We was hikin' a hundred and twenty steps to the minute and marchin' at attention all the time, and washin' the carriages every night, full pack every man, showdown inspection Saturday, snappy salute, the mill if they caught you with your pistol belt off, not allowed to leave camp after dark, oh, boy!"

"It ain't bad now," said Ham. "Eadie, you're in luck. They're drillin' us as if they were gettin' ready for another war, but there's a new rumor out that we're goin' home, so maybe it won't last long."

"Eadie, you was always lousy with luck," remarked Short. "We used to think of you when we was hikin' through the cold rain, tired an' hungry, an' it gettin' dark an' the guns an' carriages to wash an' horses to water before we'd get any sleep, an' you snug an' warm in a white bed holdin' a good-lookin' nurse's hand!"

Eadie grunted. It was warm in the room and he arose and removed his overcoat. Then he sat down again, resting his arms on the table. The beer arrived, but no one drank. They were all looking at Eadie's sleeve. On his right cuff was the mark of stripes, such as one sees on the sleeve of a newly busted non-com. There were little bits of thread there and a tear where the knife had slipped.

"You ain't wearin' no wound stripes?" questioned Ham, after an embarrassed pause.

"No," said Eadie, reaching out for a glass of beer. "The whole outfit knows I was wounded." He took a draught of beer and smacked his lips. "All you get by wearing wound stripes is a lot of cheap conversation!"

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